

Learning new ways to continue to be here when families need us the most.



A message from
Linda Kenny,
KidsAbility's CEO

If these last few months reminded us of anything it is that no matter what challenges or obstacles we may face, KidsAbility's team is creative, innovative and passionate about finding new ways to continue to be there when families need us the most.

Looking back on the last six months, we have a lot to be thankful for and proud of. When we closed the doors on our physical sites in March, we did not know what the future would hold only that we had a responsibility and a role to play – more critical than ever – to support families in new ways. Our team pivoted quickly allowing us to remain available and ready to help our children continue to reach their goals – virtually. This was something new for KidsAbility but through the use of technology, our staff were able to come up with a plan that made sense for families so that their children could continue to receive the therapy and supports that they needed in the comfort and safety of their home. Although it was certainly a new way of serving children, we realized that for so many of our clients, it proved to be just as successful as in-person visits. That was pretty awesome! And then in May, KidsAbility welcomed back our first client face-to-face at our Waterloo site. What an emotional day that was for us! We had missed the sound of laughter and voices in our hallways. We are grateful for your messages of support and donations throughout these times. You helped to make these successes possible.

As we continue to welcome more staff, children and families back for face-to-face visits across our sites, virtual therapy will continue to be an important way that we can serve families – no matter where they are. As always, our priority is the safety and wellbeing of everyone and our plan reflects that. We are agile and able to respond to changes as they come continuing to make the best decisions with the best information available guided by the recommendations from Public Health and our government officials.

As donors, your support has meant the world to us and thanks to you, we will continue to be there when families need us the most. Together, brighter futures happen here.

connections

sharing the stories of lives you help empower

A smile that speaks louder than words - thanks to you!

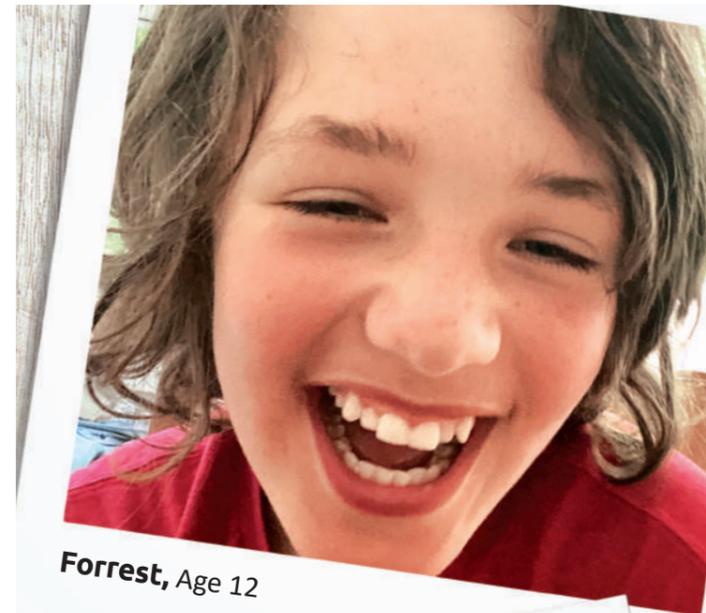
Twelve-year-old Forrest Blacksmith is usually the last person to finish the annual Guelph Superhero Run in support of KidsAbility. But he does it all by himself thanks to early and ongoing physiotherapy and occupational therapy he received at KidsAbility - and the support from donors like you.

"Those first five years with KidsAbility were the most pivotal for Forrest when he was learning to walk," shares Shana Blackburn, Forrest's mom. "And we received the key support we needed as parents. We've attended the Run almost every year to raise funds for other families and wanted to help fill the gap left from cancelled events."

Those first five years with KidsAbility were the most pivotal for Forrest when he was learning to walk."

When the former Run was reimaged as the Superhero Virtual Challenge this June, it was to allow families to choose for themselves how to participate safely within their neighbourhoods.

Forrest's parents set to work mapping a 1 km route for him in their St. George's Park Neighbourhood in Guelph. They chose a date, welcomed family and friends to cheer him from a distance and created a fundraising page.



Forrest, Age 12



Forrest, Age 2

Our world might have paused – but your kindness did not.

From the beginning of this pandemic you've held space in your heart for our kids and their families.

- You rallied – to help fill the gap left from cancelled community events.
- You resolved – to ensure valuable programs and supports would continue to reach children and youth who otherwise would not receive them.
- You responded – with words of encouragement during these unique times.

As we journey together, thank you for all the ways in which you remain steadfast in supporting the needs of kids and youth in our community. **We truly could not have travelled this far without you. Thank you.**

If you would like to make a gift at this time, please connect with Lisa Talbot at 519.886.8886 ext. 1201 or visit kidsability.ca/support. Every gift, no matter how small, provides consistent support to meet the needs of our children and youth, and ensures help is there when they need it the most.



Welcome to **connections** – sharing the stories of lives you help empower.

The name of our newsletter has changed but the joys and successes shared here are still made possible because of you.

Each story brings you closer to the lives of our KidsAbility community – kids and their families, staff, volunteers and supporters like you – who value the uniqueness of each child and youth and their right to realize their full potential.

You can expect connections twice yearly in print, or you can choose to receive it electronically. Because, keeping you connected with the kids and their families' lives you help to empower is what matters most. **Let's connect!**



Lisa Talbot,
Executive Director
KidsAbility Foundation

Not yet connected electronically? Always stay updated with how your support is helping children and youth reach their goals!



To receive the latest KidsAbility Foundation news to your inbox please email us at kafoundation@kidsability.ca to sign up today.



"The Run has become a symbolic event," shares Greg Smith, Forrest's dad. "Each year acts as a milestone journey for Forrest. It doesn't matter how long it takes for him to complete it. It helps us remember how far he's come."

Forrest reached his milestone that day. Amidst 30 degree heat and with only one water break, he completed the 1 km route in only 48 minutes. Friends, neighbours, his teacher and Educational Assistants were on hand to give him the outpouring of support he needed. By his final step, Forrest had doubled his original goal, raising a total of \$2,205 which will greatly impact kids in our community.

Each year acts as a milestone journey for Forrest. It helps us remember how far he's come."

When Forrest is determined, there is so much he can do. Staying connected with KidsAbility for consultations, walker fittings and occupational therapy referrals has helped him progress from crutches to a walker, to now walking short distances on his own. Forrest continues to take part in youth PD days and recreation programs offered by KidsAbility. Greg and Shana both agree that KidsAbility has encouraged Forrest with a drive to succeed in all he does.

Your donations make it possible for youth like Forrest to build peer-to-peer social skills while also supporting independence, inclusion and belonging. It's one of the many ways you support children and youth to achieve great things at home, at school and in our community.

Forrest participating in the 2020 Superhero Virtual Challenge in support of KidsAbility.



The brightest futures made possible by you!

Being a teen is challenging. Graduating from high school in 2020 is nothing less than remarkable. Ryan and Savannah are two KidsAbility alumni who demonstrate that with determination, effort and perseverance – and support from you – the future is theirs to explore!



Ryan Kokiw,
2020 Carol Shantz Bursary Recipient

Ryan Kokiw never lets his challenges stand between setting clear goals and achieving them. Born with cerebral palsy, he views his disability as a defining part of who he is.

From his time as a KidsAbility Ambassador to now, Ryan continues to be a strong advocate for KidsAbility, openly sharing with peers that anyone can do anything with the right mindset. For his diligence, Ryan was named the recipient of the 2020 Carol Shantz Bursary Award.

Savannah Meadus has a dream to help others. It's fueled by her own childhood success with therapy at KidsAbility. As a young child and a twin, her pediatrician noticed she was not reaching age appropriate milestones. When her family discovered KidsAbility, she thrived from early intensive speech and occupational therapy.

Savannah embraces her differences and credits her ability to overcome obstacles – which could have held her back – with becoming a competitive basketball player in school. She secured the Steve Kidd Bursary Award and she is eager to bring her personal success story with KidsAbility to Fanshawe College's Occupational and Physiotherapy Assistant Program.

From specialized therapy received when they were young to the brightest future waiting to be discovered, the successes of youth like Forrest, Ryan and Savannah are made possible by our professional therapy teams and support staff, and the hearts of community supporters like you who believe in a more inclusive community.



Savannah Meadus,
2020 Steve Kidd Bursary Recipient

Welcome Foundation Board Members

Leslie Doherty

Donna Koppers

Jennifer Roggemann



This June we welcomed new leadership volunteers to merge their strengths, talents and passion for children and youth. Biographies can be found at kidsability.ca/foundationboard.



September 14–20, 2020

Smile Cookies are back and they only cost \$1 each. In Kitchener-Waterloo, the full purchase price of the cookie goes to help support KidsAbility and Nutrition for Learning.

***plus applicable taxes, offer available for a limited time.**