

Luisa D'Amato | Wed Apr 10 2013 07:50:00 | 1 Recommend

D'Amato: It's Graydon's turn to help an agency that helped him

By Luisa D'Amato



When Graydon Large was only three months old, his mother knew something was wrong. He was smiling, but he wasn't lifting his head.

His mother got him to KidsAbility, a wonderful agency that provides rehabilitation to children with special needs in Waterloo Region and beyond. She didn't know what to do, but they did.

Graydon got speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and a junior kindergarten program. Doctors gave him a diagnosis of congenital muscle dystrophy. But he persevered. He graduated from crawling to using a wheelchair. And now at 12, he can walk and run, with a special wheeled device that helps him keep his balance.

On May 5, Graydon will participate in a 3-kilometre run to raise funds for the agency that has helped him so much.

The event, sponsored by Grand River Rotary Club, takes place in downtown Kitchener and is called the Mudpuppy Chase. About 500 children come out for the 3K race. Many come from area schools, but a few of them are clients of the agency, like Graydon.

Race director Justin Nesbitt said it's wonderful to see how happy some of those kids are when they cross the finish line.

"It's a really good community event," he said.

Today, Graydon's mom, Deirdre Large, is visibly confident in the plan for him, which is to constantly challenge him with physical activity, and not to worry too much about the diagnosis.

Graydon is a lad of few words and a wide, sweet smile. If he'd rather be playing video games instead of swimming and running and biking, you wouldn't know family built a pool in the backyard for him, and he has a three-wheeled bike. This summer, for the third year, he will take part in a triathlon — biking for six kil running for two, and swimming for 150 metres. It will raise money for a different charity.

The family is always finding ways to give back. Last year, Graydon was the KidsAbility "ambassador." He attended posh receptions, and even tea at Langdon meet donors and other dignitaries and talk to them about how the agency made a difference in his life. "It was cool," he said.



Graydon Large is getting ready for the Mudpuppy Chase, which money for KidsAbility.

Peter Lee/Re

And his school, Bridgeport Public School, where he is in Grade 6, helped, too. Kids brought in loonies and toonies for KidsAbility. Because they surpassed the mark, the principal, a couple of teachers and Deirdre made the climb all the way up the CN Tower in Toronto.

Deirdre's story speaks volumes about this community.

When she didn't know what to do with her infant son, she ended up on the agency's doorstep.

"You can't ask your mother, you can't ask your friends they took me by the hand ... they explain everything and they tell you exactly what they think he ne

If you want to sponsor Graydon for the race, go to <http://www.mudpuppychase.com/> (<http://www.mudpuppychase.com/>) and click on the "Pledge a Runner" li

Idamato@therecord.com

