

Kids with autism take small steps giant leaps

Because of you...

Here at Giant Steps, it's all about **intervention and integration** - building the skills and abilities of children with autism through specialized academic and life skills programs, providing therapy to help them cope with the complex challenges of autism, and integrating them into their neighbourhood schools where they learn and play with typically developing children.

This year, we have finished renovations on our calming centre and library. In all our academic and therapy departments, we now boast wonderful new tools, resources and technology that are helping our kids make gains in every developmental area.

To our friends, volunteers and donors, we thank you for your support. Your generosity is enabling children with Autism Spectrum Disorder!



A major gift from The Bridle Bash Foundation provides amazing opportunities

A grant of \$100,000 from The Bridle Bash Foundation has transformed our largest room into an autism-friendly resource centre full of technology. On May 14, Giant Steps' guests, families, staff and Board of Directors were thrilled to celebrate its opening with our special friends from the Foundation. Their gift is the largest single grant ever received here at Giant Steps!



The Resource Centre is a fresh new space where our teachers and therapists are using the latest tools and technology to help our kids gain skills in academics, communication, and social and life skills.

The Centre features books, story time and work areas, listening and TV/DVD centres, a SMART Board, touch screen computers and augmentative communication devices for non-verbal children. Softened colours, minimal clutter and dimmable lighting limit sensory overload. Bean bag chairs, floor cushions and therapy balls offer support and proprioceptive feedback to facilitate attention and engagement.

We are honoured to be a recipient of The Bridle Bash Foundation's exceptional work in the community. How they have enriched our school and our children's programming!

IMPACT

Our kids at work in our resource centre



From top: Students enjoying the books; boys playing Kinect; Simona on a touch screen computer; Special Ed teacher, Laurie, and group working with iPads

SUCCESS STORIES

Meet our students who are making the leap from Giant Steps

Domenic

Poised to enter high school in the fall, 13 year-old Domenic's progress was evident when he spoke to a standing ovation at our Circle of Friends dinner dance in April, and delivered the following speech at his graduation this June:

“ Good afternoon, my name is Domenic. I want to tell you a bit about my 4 wonderful years at Giant Steps. Giant Steps helped me be the person I am today.

I have learned so many things at Giant Steps, I learned having an education is important. Albert Einstein once said everyone is a genius in their own way. I have learned many life skills that will help me one day to live independently.

Along the way, I made friends with special people. They say a friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future and accepts you today just the way you are. I will always treasure my friendship with Chris because we talk about game shows, Kyle because we played games together and Michael because we spent every recess making movies together.

I will miss Colleen because she gave us great opportunities in the school, Dan because he helped me in my not so great moments, Stacey because she pushed me to learn new things. I will especially miss Mrs. Hutton because she always encouraged me to be the best I can be!

I want to thank my family for always loving and being there for me! To my Nonno, a big thank you for being my best friend and supporting me always, I love you!



Christopher

At age 12, Christopher leaves Giant Steps with strong math and computer skills. He has made great gains in daily living skills and conquered the rock wall, cargo net and team swing in our climbing centre. We will miss his vast knowledge of game show trivia and his outstanding ability to recall dates!



Nikta

After 2 years at Giant Steps, 14 year-old Nikta moves on to high school with some wonderful new skills --- she now uses an iPad for communication and gaming, rides a 2-wheel bicycle, has made significant academic gains and gained interest in socializing with her peers. We will miss her infectious smile!



Sam

8 year-old Sam has made great gains in literacy skills in his 2 years at Giant Steps, now reading with meaning and managing his own money to purchase his favourite fire trucks. Our therapists have worked hard on finding solutions for his severely limited diet and he has made tremendous progress in this area. We wish he and his family well as they move north.



Alessio

After 4 years at Giant Steps, 8 year-old Alessio is graduating to a regular Grade 3 class in his neighbourhood school. A self-confident little boy, he braved the crowd at our Open House in May, thanking Marnie Salsky of The Bridle Bash Foundation for our new resource centre - "a really cool place to have fun and learn!".



His mom Patricia has much to say on Alessio's progress at Giant Steps:

“ We are so proud that this fall Alessio will be a full-time student at our local school. Thanks to Giant Steps' academic and therapy programs, Alessio is now able to communicate and have meaningful social interactions, is learning at an age-appropriate level and is coping with the sensory challenges that affect him every day. It is a bittersweet moment having Alessio graduate - we are so pleased with the tremendous gains he's made and that he has established some lifelong friendships with the kids at Giant Steps, but we are also sad that his experience at such a unique, evolving and thriving learning environment has come to an end. ”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

All of us at Giant Steps are grateful for the generosity of these major gift donors and the special impact they have had on our kids' progress this year.

KBSH Spirit Foundation

\$20,000 for iPads

With new iPads and iAdaptor cases, communication software and funding for staff training, a whole world of learning and communication is at our students' fingertips.



TD Securities Underwriting Hope Charity Auction

\$25,000 for speech therapy

Speech and communication challenges are a hallmark of autism; our Speech & Language program gives our kids a voice, providing hands-on therapy and support to our students and staff.



Unity for Autism

\$25,000 for music therapy

Music is a special area of interest for many individuals with autism; through music therapy, our kids enjoy unique avenues for self-expression, relaxation, recreation and learning.



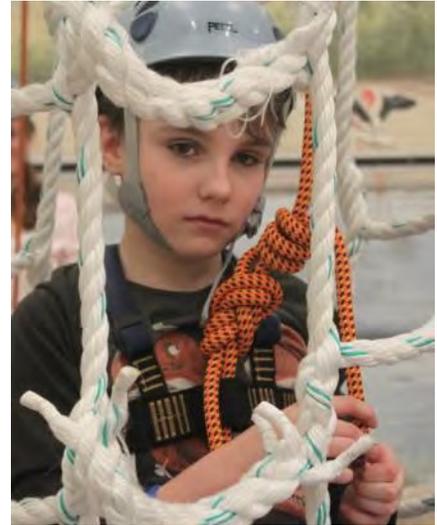
The Masonic Foundation of Ontario \$64,000 for therapy, resources and technology

Our largest gift in 2011-12 for hands-on therapies and the latest assessment tools, resources and technology, including SMART Boards and iPad 2's. Due to the Foundation's exceptional generosity, our centre abounds with new opportunities for growth and development for our kids!



Giant Steps has a new website!
Learn more about us at giantstepstoronto.ca

Did You Know...?



...► The U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention reported in March that autism is almost twice as prevalent now as it was a decade ago.

As many as 1 in 88 children now have autism, and the disorder is almost 5 times as common in boys; 1 in 54 boys are affected.

Check out cdc.gov/features/CountingAutism to learn more.

Walk, run, donate!

Sunday October 14



Giant Steps' team will once again hit the pavement, participating in the full and half marathons and the 5 km run/walk at the Scotiabank Group Charity Challenge.



Join us and be a part of the event that is critical to funding our kids' therapy programs.

Visit the Events page at giantstepstoronto.ca for details

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