

Kids with autism grow in leaps & bounds

It's been a busy and productive year here at Giant Steps. Every one of our kids, whether age 4 or 14, has progressed in so many ways. We wish you could see them in action and engaged in our classrooms, in therapy sessions, during playtime, even at lunch and recess.



You might see kids up on our climbing wall, a group math lesson on iPads, a child unwinding in our Snoezelen Room and excited children playing on our Xbox. Older students may be practising

social communication strategies through an interactive program on a SMART Board with our speech therapist. A student learning to print in an occupational therapy session, another on his way to his neighbourhood public school with his program assistant. Other kids returning to their classroom, ready to learn after a session in the gym on our exercise equipment or climbing wall.

Our kids gain new skills and abilities through individualized programs of academics and the best practices of speech, occupational and behavior therapies. Supported by a Giant Steps Program Assistant, they are gradually transitioned into regular classrooms in their local public schools for part of their week. There they learn and play with typically developing peers and the backing of our dedicated academic and therapy team.

All of the action reflects our steadfast belief that a comprehensive, data-driven approach of academics, therapies AND inclusion best meets the complex learning needs of children with autism.

**To our friends & donors,
THANK YOU for making a difference
for our kids this year!**

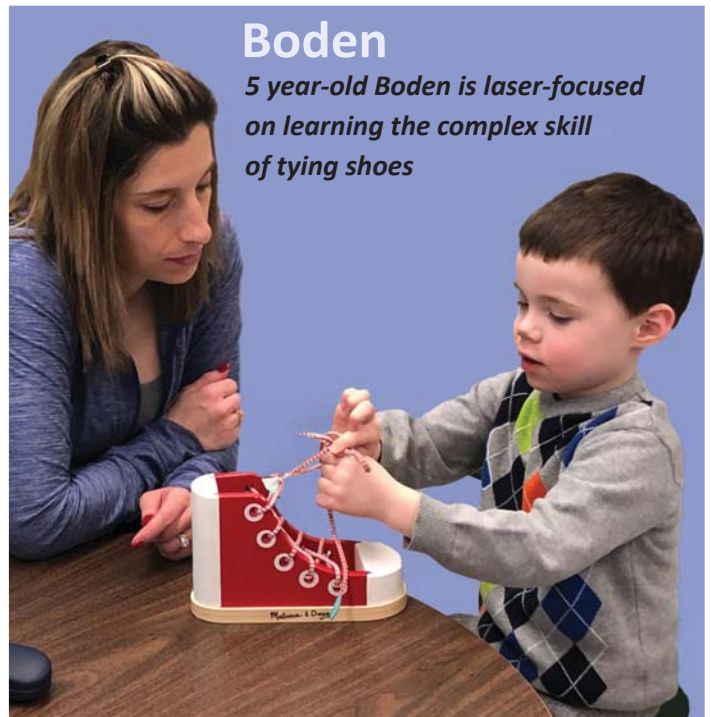
Clara

9 year-old Clara welcomes classmates from her local school to Giant Steps



Boden

5 year-old Boden is laser-focused on learning the complex skill of tying shoes



It's been an awesome year at Giant Steps!

Our students and staff engage in a wide variety of programs, events and outings. Here are some of the activities that fostered growth and learning for our kids this year.



School-wide

- Parent training/observation sessions & IEP meetings with families, therapists and teachers
- Parent education: work experience for secondary school-aged students with autism, Racing with Autism with Jason Riley, father of Austin Riley, use of essential oils for stress and anxiety
- Educational placements at Giant Steps for students from University of Guelph-Humber, University of Waterloo, Seneca College, Humber College, St. Lawrence College
- Implementation of the Edmark Reading Program, courtesy of Markham Milliken Mills Lions Club
- Integration of an accessible SMART Board into academic and therapy programming, thanks to the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism
- Computer equipment, courtesy of Indeed
- Sharing our Unity for Autism Snoezelen Room with local school community classes
- Raising the flag for World Autism Awareness Day
- Holiday Festive Feast celebration with Giant Steps' families
- Parent facebook group and social outings for families

Students

- Academic and speech, behaviour and occupational therapy sessions
- Occupational therapy food group and cooking classes, pre-printing group and Zones of Regulation group
- Skating & swimming lessons
- Street safety, shopping and maple syrup making outings
- Food truck visit, courtesy of Urban Smoke Food Truck
- Markham Firefighters visit
- Valentine, Halloween, Easter & birthday celebrations, and Toronto sports team days
- Participation in the Students of Differing Abilities Athletics and Activities Meet
- Evening Sports & Rec Club for Kids with Autism

Fundraising

- Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon
- Giant Steps' Annual Raffle for Kids with Autism
- OLG Bingo at Bingo World Richmond Hill
- Gracie Woodbridge Kids' Jiu-Jitsu Tournament
- Flemingdon Park Golf Club Tournament
- Giant Steps' Annual Rummage Sale



Staff

- Clinical review meetings & site visits to inclusion classrooms
- Transition planning with families of graduating students & school staff
- Professional development on Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training, first aid/CPR, prompt fading strategies, principles of reinforcement, Zones of Regulation, augmentation communication tools
- Digital literacy presentation for individuals with autism



A family's story "Our son Nurasy!"



"Our son Nurasy was diagnosed with autism just before he turned 3 years old. He could not speak, had great difficulty with eye contact or focusing on any task, and was very hyperactive. We did not even know what autism was so our research began. It took a long time for us to accept his diagnosis.

Nurasy did start to speak 2 years later at age 5, but school was a huge challenge. He was very anxious there and had difficulty coping with the noisy, busy classroom even with the support of an educational assistant. The school finally suggested he needed a different learning environment, and told us about Giant Steps. We felt extremely lucky when Nurasy was accepted to the program.

At Giant Steps, Nurasy made so many gains - from communication, fine motor, social and daily living skills and following routines and schedules, to a wonderful curiosity for learning, especially about geography, history and even world politics. We are excited to report that he has transitioned full time to a Grade 5 class in our local public school this September.

As Giant Steps parents, we were important partners in Nurasy's programming and were kept in the loop all along the way. The combination of academics and therapies and the gradual inclusion into our neighbourhood public school with Giant Steps' support is the reason Nurasy is the confident, independent and social boy he is today. Our family is indebted to the amazing, dedicated team at Giant Steps. Thank you all!"

Anar & Azamat, Nurasy's parents



The heart of our team

Talk to any of our families and they are quick to sing the praises of our kids' Program Assistants.

To gain new skills and abilities, children with autism need individualized, structured support and specialized academic and therapy programs. And, if learning is going to be impactful, strategies to implement those new skills outside of the therapy room or classroom are crucial.



Our PAs are there every step of the way, participating in our kids' therapy sessions, providing hands-on support in our classrooms, collecting data, and ensuring academic and therapy strategies are implemented, practiced and generalized to every setting.

They support our kids in their local public school classrooms, enabling them to learn and play for part of their school week with typically developing peers, a unique cornerstone to Giant Steps' programming and philosophy of intervention and inclusion.

As one Giant Steps' parent tells us:

"Program Assistants play a huge role in my son's success both at Giant Steps and at our neighbourhood school. They expertly support him when he needs it, but also know when to step back and let him be independent and face new challenges."



BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR
and your support will have
double the impact for kids like Daniel!



Longo's Family Charitable Foundation, a generous supporter of Giant Steps since 2003, will **MATCH YOUR MONTHLY DONATIONS** up to a total of \$10,000!

Visit us at
giantstepstoronto.ca/be-a-champion

STEPPING AHEAD 2019

giantstepstoronto.ca
facebook.com/GiantStepsToronto
Registered Charitable # 898362579RR0001



Giant Steps Toronto • York Region
35 Flowervale Road
Thornhill, Ontario Canada L3T 4J3

905.881.3104
info@giantstepstoronto.ca

Affiliated with the York Region District School Board

Thank you to our generous donors!

Our kids' therapy programs, technology and resources are funded by our events and activities, our families, and YOU, our donors.

Our Donors of \$500 & More

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| 88Keys Music School | James and Christine Gallas | Sanjib Mukherjee |
| Alice & Murray Maitland Foundation | Deqiang Han | Kishanthan Nithyanandan |
| AMD Canada ATI Technologies ULC | Khemron & Denyse Herawan | Don Pagnutti |
| AquaForce Power Clean Inc. | The Honey & Leonard Wolfe Family Charitable Foundation | Pagnutti Management Inc. |
| Axxess Logistics Div. 864884 Ontario Inc. | HP AMS Graphics Solutions Services | Michel Paradis & Arlene Kern |
| Dolly Bachew | Intercity Realty Inc., Brokerage | Sandhya Ramanarayanan |
| Bateman, Graham & Fitzpatrick Chartered Accountants | Warren Keefe | Krishna Ramnarine |
| Blair Building Materials Inc. | KidKiddos Books Ltd. | Vijay Ramnarine |
| Clive Caldwell | Juan Kim | Rockwell Contracting Ltd. |
| Trish Callon | Risa Kurtz | Sackda Graphics |
| Cardio Health | Laptop Pro | Samuel, Son & Co., Limited |
| Gisela Carere | Ann Leibel | Craig & Beverley Scott |
| David Chang | LiUNA Local 183 | Robert & Karen Scott |
| Arun Chellappah | Local 506-Labourers' International Union of North America | Darryl Sittler |
| Danny Cisterna | Karen Luijten | St. Paul's Church L'Amoreaux |
| CZ Jewelry Queen Inc. | Malfar Mechanical Inc. | Sun Life Financial Matching Gifts |
| George & Rosella DiPede | Markham Milliken Mills Lions Club | Tekpro Store |
| Fineline Paper | Mastercard Matching Gifts | Agatha Chantel Tisi |
| Fitz by Design Inc. | Dan Mayer | Vera Veljanov |
| George Frankfort | | Carmen Vogel |
| | | Milan & Catherine Voticky |

Our Major Gift Donors

