



CPRA ACPL

REACHING EACH AND EVERY ONE

# Success Story

iCan Bike participant, Marco, practices his bike skills alongside Children's Treatment Centre therapists.

## ICan Bike boosts confidence, independence for Chatham-Kent youth

**WHEN 11 YEAR-OLD MARCO MOCCIA** tried to ride a two-wheel bike for the first time, he'd stop and get off when the bike got a bit wobbly.

As a child with Down Syndrome, Marco felt nervous taking on this new endeavour because he never had the opportunity to ride a two-wheel bike like other kids his age.

But Marco stuck with it. Gradually, he gained more self-confidence. Now, his parents Karleen and Tony can barely keep up as their son proudly – and independently - rides down his street without any fear.



CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRE FOUNDATION  
OF CHATHAM-KENT, ONTARIO

Canada

This project is funded by  
the Government of Canada



Marco, iCan Bike participant, shares a smile with his mom during iCan Bike held in Chatham.



iCan Bike participant, Marco, practices his bike skills alongside Children's Treatment Centre therapists.

“It means the world to us that he has gained another skill to allow him to grow and potentially live as independently as possible. The self-confidence, the strength, the independence will always be with him,” says Karleen. “Such great family adventures await.”

Marco was one of 20 youth who were given this incredible opportunity through the iCanShine's iCanBike program, which was delivered through the Children's Treatment Centre Foundation of Chatham-Kent in the summer of 2023. The organization was able to deliver the program thanks to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Reaching Each and Every One: A Community Sport Intervention program. This program, which was funded by Sport Canada's Community Sport for All Initiative, seeks to remove barriers, and increase sport participation rates for equity deserving groups across Canada.

Alison Munro, a recreational therapist with the Children's Treatment Centre, says the international program that's offered across North America brings patented equipment and a team of experts to deliver the program across communities like Chatham-Kent – but there is a hefty price tag.

“The majority, if not all, of the funding we received went to offering the actual program,” Munro says.

The program was delivered over five days for youth aged eight to 18 with disabilities. By the end of the program, almost all youth were able to ride two-wheel bikes independently across 75 feet.

“The biggest barrier for a lot of our kids was having that balance and stability, and just having the right equipment to be able to work through those fears and anxieties,” Munro explains.

She adds that the program made a significant impact on both participants, and their families.

“There were tears from staff and parents,” she says, adding that the program also removed barriers for families who couldn't enjoy leisure activities, like cycling, together. “If you are a family and you have a child who can not ride a bike, that's a family leisure activity you can't access together. This program broke down those barriers, and opened a door to allow them to enjoy this activity together.”

Erin Genge, community engagement coordinator for the Children's Treatment Centre Foundation of Chatham-Kent, adds that the funding allowed the organization to deliver programming that will have lifelong impacts on its participants.

“Everyone deserves access to recreation, and this funding allowed us to carry out a program that delivers that to kids in our community,” Genge says. “They learned a skill that they can carry on throughout their entire lives. Having funding support in order to bring a program like this into our community, regardless of what the participants' abilities are, is huge.”

The Moccia family described the week-long program as “humbling” and “heart-felt” as they watched their son – and others – gain confidence and strength both physically and emotionally.

“The strength each and every rider displayed was so great to watch,” says Karleen. “Our kids face barriers every day, and this opportunity allowed them to feel so much confidence and to be able to accomplish something on their own.” 🍁