

“It just feels so encouraging and hopeful!”

How your support has helped baby Rhys



Last April, Rachel and Jordan welcomed their beautiful baby Rhys to the world. He was born with a rare genetic condition called Epidermolysis Ichthyosis (EI), which causes his skin to painfully blister and thicken in response to any contact—even from the seams on his clothing or from crawling on the floor. But because it’s so uncommon, finding ways to manage Rhys’ symptoms is challenging.

“It can be really isolating,” says Rachel. “At first, we were scared to take Rhys places. But working with the therapists at KidsAbility has been so encouraging. Even though there are only a handful of children with EI in the whole world, just hearing that KidsAbility can help, that there are things we can do to help Rhys achieve his milestones, just feels so encouraging and hopeful.”

Because the pads of Rhys’ feet and hands do not blister like the rest of his body, his physiotherapist at KidsAbility helps the family

develop systems to minimize damage to his skin with a specialized plan to encourage Rhys to stand and walk rather than crawl.

A KidsAbility social worker supports Rachel and Jordan as they navigate external resources and funding that might be available. All of these services are made possible by generous donors like you, who ensure kids of all abilities have what they need to thrive.

Living just minutes away from KidsAbility, Rachel is thankful to have a local option that supports not just Rhys, but her and Jordan too. By sharing her son’s story, she hopes to raise awareness and offer a message of hope to other families facing rare medical conditions. She wants them to know they have somewhere to turn for help thanks to kind community members like you.

Thank you for your caring support of children with rare medical conditions like Rhys!

Shake and Bake Takes the Cake

Teaching essential life skills with food—thanks to donors like you!

A packed pantry and a filled fridge are like a playground for participants of our Shake and Bake Program.

Did you know that your donations help stock the KidsAbility kitchen with all the trimmings needed to offer this experience-based learning program?

Our cooking class gives children the opportunity to explore the world of food and practice social skills with a small group of peers while trying delicious recipes. From measuring and combining ingredients to practicing conversation, and collaborating with others to make decisions, kids in Shake and Bake are exposed to a variety of real-life food prep challenges that help them gain confidence.

Clinical Supervisor of Autism and Behaviour Support Services Lisa Peterson shares there is a real enthusiasm for this program.

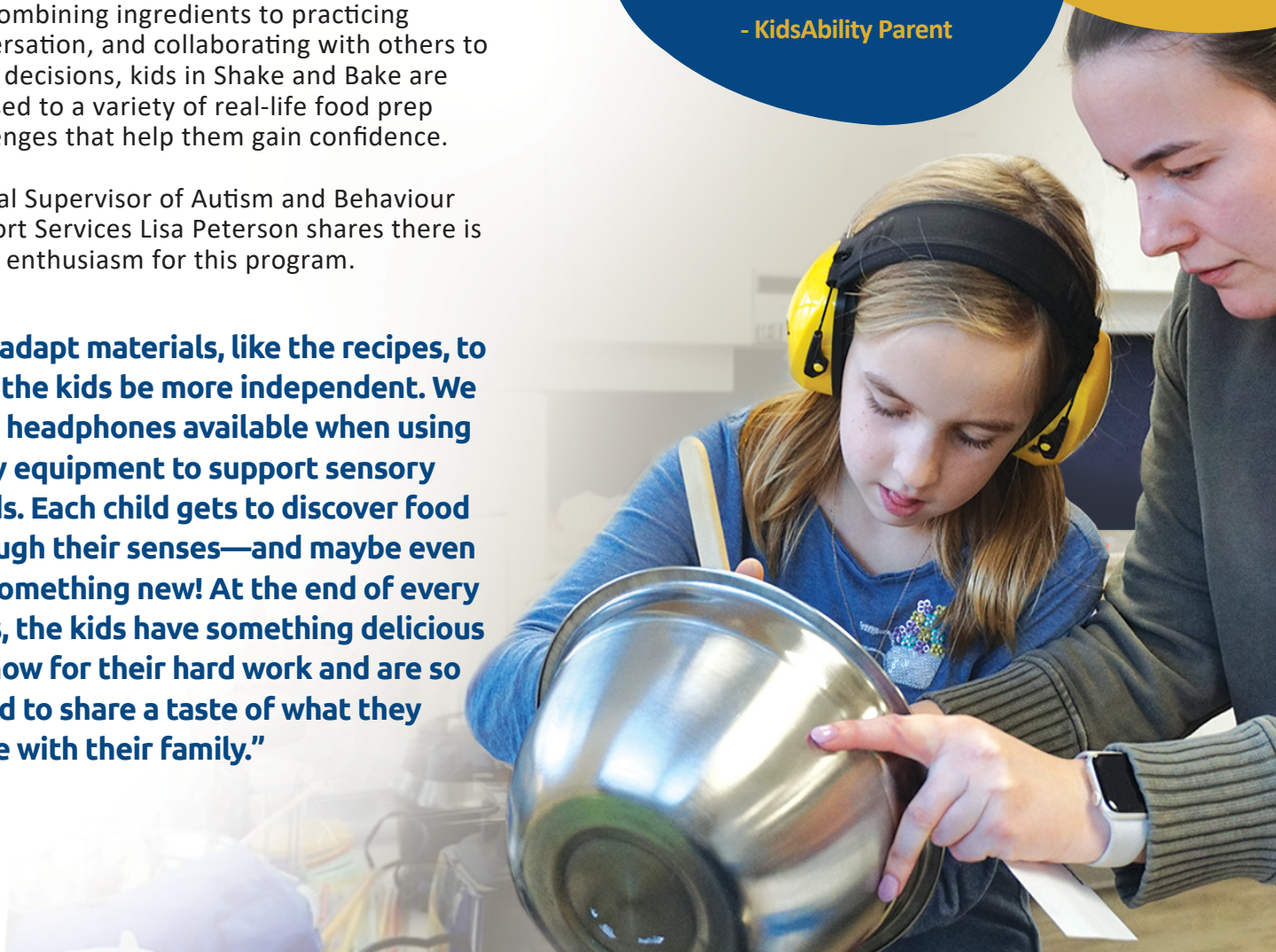
“We adapt materials, like the recipes, to help the kids be more independent. We have headphones available when using noisy equipment to support sensory needs. Each child gets to discover food through their senses—and maybe even try something new! At the end of every class, the kids have something delicious to show for their hard work and are so proud to share a taste of what they made with their family.”

Shake and Bake is a hit with parents, too. We’ve offered it for two terms now and it was the first program to fill up both times!

When you make a donation to KidsAbility, you’re providing kids with an environment that nurtures their curiosity. And these unforgettable experiences stick with them as they develop their unique strengths and work toward achieving their goals. Thank you for helping provide the supplies needed for our Shake and Bake cooking classes!

“My son was so excited to bring home the cookies he made,” says one mom. “He really enjoyed himself and was so happy!”

- KidsAbility Parent





Carl and Joyce Heck
KidsAbility
Legacy Donors

A Gift for the Future

Just eight minutes from Carl and Joyce Heck's home stands the Waterloo location of KidsAbility. It's a big reminder of the couple's long-time commitment to supporting children in our community.

Carl has been involved with KidsAbility since the first day ground was broken in 1994 for what is now the site of our Waterloo location, helping to raise funds while employed as an electrical engineer for the WalterFedy firm who designed and built it. Inspired by KidsAbility's individualized approach to supporting children, Carl and Joyce continued to donate and fundraise to keep the organization going strong. When their niece was born with disabilities, they were reminded how a child's access to therapy can never be taken for granted.

"When we did our Will, that's when we learned how easy it was to include a gift to KidsAbility in our estate plans, along with taking care of our loved ones," says Joyce. "We still support KidsAbility on a regular basis every year, but this way we know our support will carry on."

Carl adds, "Making a gift in our Will gives us peace of mind. We feel fortunate to be able to give, and it just feels really good to contribute to a cause like KidsAbility, where every child's achievements and accomplishments are celebrated."

It's thanks to the tremendous ongoing support of donors like Carl and Joyce that the brightest future for children and youth is possible.

To learn more about leaving a legacy or other ways to give, contact Lisa Talbot at ltalbot@kidsability.ca or Sarah Witmer at switmer@kidsability.ca or call 519-886-8886 ext. 1201. You can also visit our website at kidsability.ca/legacy.



Your Gift Puts Communication within Reach for Kids like Molly



Please renew your support today!

Communication is an important life skill. It's how we let others know about our wants, needs, and boundaries. But not everyone has the same access to communication. Some children face challenges conveying what's on their mind through speech or writing and they need alternatives so that they can fully participate in life.

At KidsAbility, we offer Augmentative Communication Services (ACS) to provide those alternatives. These services help kids achieve face-to-face communication as well as written communication based on their unique goals. We take a team-based approach to support families, children, and youth. That means we engage speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and other members of a child's support team to best address their unique communication needs.

By offering various solutions—such as writing aids, eye gaze technology, and devices with touchscreen technology—we help to empower kids to advocate for themselves and let their personalities shine.

For ten-year-old Molly, who has been part of the KidsAbility community since she was seven months old, ACS has been instrumental in her development. Her mom Fran says, "These services have given Molly access to an eye-gaze device, which has made a world of difference. She is able to communicate her wants and needs to her peers, her teachers and to us. And it helps her humorous side come through—parts of her personality that we never would have truly known without access to this technology!"

Programs like Augmentative Communication Services transform possibilities for kids like Molly and their families. Please donate today so that more children in our communities can access these life-changing programs!



Thank you for your caring support!

We depend on donors like you to help children in our communities thrive, and we're grateful for your generosity!

Please let us know what you'd like to read about in future issues of your donor newsletter. You can email me at Italbot@kidsability.ca. **I'd love to hear from you!**