



***“First thing I’m gonna do is ride my new bike to McDonalds,”*** exclaims Lincoln, a 6-year-old senior kindergarten student. Not an unusual declaration for most kids his age.

But this joyful, adventurous and very independent little boy from Wasaga Beach faces significant physical challenges as a result of Cerebral Palsy. Unable to walk, sit or stand without assistance, Lincoln requires regular visits to specialists and frequent physiotherapy and occupational therapy to combat tight muscles and joints.

Specialized equipment like a walker, a supportive classroom chair, a vertical stander, and of course, the new beloved adapted bike helps him keep up with his twin brother Windrim and the rest of his classmates at Worsley Elementary School.



*The beaming smile says it all! Lincoln can’t wait to test drive a specially adapted bike. Teacher Carrie Rogers (left), EA Donna Payne (right), PT Melissa Morby (right back) and mom Stacy (centre back) help him get on board.*

*Lincoln’s test drive included a trip down the hall to tell his classmates he’ll be able to ride around with them at recess.*

With the support of his team and his Single Plan of Care, Lincoln not only keeps up, he’s thriving in an environment where he can participate safely in all aspects of school life.

The eight members of Lincoln’s team include his parents, his therapists, and everyone working with him at school including the school principal and his teacher.

They are using the Network’s Single Plan of Care approach to heighten the communication, collaboration and teamwork that’s already taking place. His mom, Stacy Ash says Lincoln’s transition into school was seamless.

### **“A fantastic partnership”**

“Lincoln’s team is absolutely incredible,” says Stacy. “Our Single Plan of Care meetings are great. We brainstorm together to make sure all the supports he needs at school are in place. Everyone is as passionate as I am about making sure Lincoln has every opportunity to reach his full potential. It’s a fantastic partnership.”



*Lincoln ‘Gets Funky’ with his best buddy Troy and the rest of the class. It seems everyone knows all the moves to the video “Dance to the Music”.*

As a result of the team’s efforts, therapy strategies have been incorporated into Lincoln’s day-to-day school activities and are adjusted as his needs or condition changes. His therapists work closely with school staff to ensure everyone can help Lincoln use his special equipment safely. Modifications made in his classroom and around the building allow him to be more independent and join in more activities with his friends.

### **Planning for Grade 1**

“Right now the team is planning Lincoln’s transition into Grade 1,” says Stacy. “He’ll be in a new classroom and in a different part of the school, so everyone is working together to make sure he has all the supports he needs in his new environment.” She adds, “I have absolutely no doubt that his transition to Grade 1 will be just as seamless as when he started school.”



# Lincoln's Team



*Lincoln's team is hard at work during a recent Single Plan of Care Meeting. (Left to right) Team Lead Melissa Morby, Team Coach Lori Brown, OT Lindsay Amey, School Principal Lorna Howlett-Lowe and mom Stacy Ash.*

*The team meets about every 4 months so that they can assess progress, address new challenges and plan for the future.*

## “Seeing his excitement is why I love this job!”

Being a member of Lincoln's team is Principal Lorna Howlett-Lowe's first experience with the Network's Single Plan of Care approach.

“This really formalizes how I've always tried to create the best school life for any child with special needs,” she states. Lorna strongly believes that communication, trust, teamwork and keeping the student at the centre of everyone's efforts are the key.

She says that academically, Lincoln is right on track and is doing well. Her focus is on making sure school facilities are accessible so that he can do as many things as possible independently.

“I need everyone's knowledge and expertise to make the best possible environment for Lincoln,” states Lorna. “No one person has all the answers. It has to be a team effort.”



*Thanks to magnetized doors, Lincoln can take his turn as the day's Special Helper and deliver the attendance sheet to Principal Lorna Howlett-Lowe.*

That means working closely with his team and the school board's facility services staff to make modifications that allow Lincoln to get around safely.

For instance one set of hallway doors was magnetized to stay open so Lincoln can access the hallway with his walker. Desks have been rearranged so the aisle in his classroom is wider and he uses a stool in the coat rack area. The equipment in one area of the playground was adjusted

slightly to make it safer for Lincoln to join his classmates. Also, the school is looking into installing a ramp at the Grade 1 entrance door. When there are new challenges or obstacles the team works together to address them.

“Seeing Lincoln's excitement and his beaming smile when he gets to do new things independently is why I love this job,” says Lorna. “It's all the little day-to-day things that make such a huge difference.”

## Leading Lincoln's Team

Lincoln's physiotherapist, Melissa Morby had no hesitation when she volunteered to lead Lincoln's team through the Single Plan of Care approach. She's been working with Lincoln since he started school and has a close relationship with Stacy and the family. As a member of five other teams using the Single Plan of Care, she also has some insight about the impact of an integrated approach.



*Educational Assistant Donna Payne looks on while Physiotherapist Melissa Morby (right) transfers Lincoln safely to his vertical stander that supports him to stay upright. His daily program includes standing for at least 20 minutes.*

“The Single Plan of Care gives families a voice,” Melissa says. “The family prioritizes needs and then everyone designs their work to meet those needs. What I've seen is that when you focus on a family's goals, you can really make a difference in a child's quality of life.”

Melissa advises that there is a learning curve and some additional time associated with leading a team through the process. But in her experience, it's a gradual curve that can be taken one step at a time. Expertise provided by Lori Brown, a service coordinator and Single Plan of Care Coach, gives Melissa access to any additional advice, counsel or support she may need to lead the team through the Single Plan of Care approach.



*Lincoln's Exer Rider helps increase his trunk strength. Lincoln obviously sees this therapeutic riding vehicle as another fun way to get around the school!*



# Lincoln's Team

Melissa estimates that it takes her about five hours to initiate the Single Plan of Care. That includes time to work with Stacy to help her clarify the family's visions and goals, coordinate the team meeting and document information in Lincoln's shared electronic record. She says an additional hour spent at the Single Plan of Care meeting, with Stacy participating, is what really focuses everyone's efforts. The team works together to problem solve and plan how to integrate and build on each other's efforts so that each activity has maximum impact on achieving the family's goals.

"I think the experience I've gained leading Lincoln's team is making me a more effective team member – and a better therapist. Supporting everyone to focus on the family's visions and goals ensures that we're directing all of our expertise toward meeting Lincoln's highest priority needs. "

## A precious gift

"My team has given me something very precious," says Stacy. "For the first time, I've learned how to let go and be a mom. I know it's not all on my shoulders now. I know Lincoln's team has got his back. We actually have family time at home now and do regular kid stuff together. That's an incredible gift for parents of a child with special needs."

Stacy adds, "After seeing Lincoln's face on that bike, I guess we'll be adding family bike rides to McDonalds to our list!"



*Lincoln (left) and his twin brother Windrim take a break from class to share a snuggle with mom.*

### LINCOLN'S TEAM

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Stacy and Tim Ash        | Lincoln's Parents  |
| 2. Heidi Ahlfeldt           | Special Education Resource Teacher, Simcoe County District School Board                                  |
| 3. Lindsay Amey             | Occupational Therapist, Closing the Gap Healthcare Group/CTN OT Services                                 |
| 4. Lori Brown               | Service Coordinator/Team Coach, North Simcoe Muskoka CCAC/CTN Service Coordinator                        |
| 5. Lorna Howlett-Lowe       | School Principal, Simcoe County District School Board  |
| 6. Melissa Morby            | Physiotherapist/Team Lead, Closing the Gap Healthcare Group/CTN PT Services                              |
| 7. Carrie Rogers            | Teacher, Simcoe County District School Board   |
| 8. Dr. Nicky Jones-Stokreef | Developmental Paediatrician, Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital/CTN Joint Management Specialty Services |

CCAC: Community Care Access Centre

CTN: Children's Treatment Network

OT/PT: Occupational Therapy/Physiotherapy

*Lincoln is a student at Worsley Elementary School in Wasaga Beach who has complex needs. His parents and his team of professionals are using the Network's Single Plan of Care approach to heighten their ability to work together and provide Lincoln with a comprehensive, coordinated plan that supports him at school, at home and at play.*

*There are currently hundreds of parents and professionals across the Network using this integrated team approach. The experience gained from working with each child and family helps us learn more about how to integrate services and increase collaboration. We get more insight on how best to address challenges and improve the process and tools so more families can benefit from a single plan of care.*

**For more information about Children's Treatment Network or the Single Plan of Care approach visit [www.ctn-simcoeyork.ca](http://www.ctn-simcoeyork.ca)**