

Barrie Child's Junior Kindergarten Dream Comes True



Aydan Graham gives developmental paediatrician Dr. Nicky Jones-Stokreef a 'high five' during a recent visit to Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital

Aydan Graham is as excited as any three year old child would be about starting JK in September.

Yet for Aydan, who is severely disabled from Cerebral Palsy, turning four and starting a new life at school also means the support network that has kept him on track for day-to-day life gets a lot more complicated. Unable to walk, sit or stand without assistance, Aydan requires frequent therapy, regular visits to specialists, and specialized equipment to help him make it through the day. He also has limited use of his arms and hands which means he requires one on one care. So for kids like Aydan, starting JK takes more than just signing up on registration day.

But Aydan's dream of starting Kindergarten will be much smoother thanks to the support of organizations that make up the Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York. And this fall he'll be counted among the new JK students at W.C. Little Elementary School in Barrie.

Aydan's mom Cindy says the new Network has been a huge boost for the family. "If it wasn't for the Network and its partners, he wouldn't be going to school. Period. He couldn't have managed it physically," she says. "Aydan has been well served by the pre-school system. But without the Children's Treatment Network, he would not have the expanded range of ongoing support he needs as quickly. He would have ended up back on wait lists for some of the services and supports, which can take up to two years."

As a designated high priority needs child, Aydan is one of the estimated 1,400 kids with multiple disabilities in Simcoe to enjoy the benefits of this unique new collaborative initiative. The Network and its partners make life easier for families by providing a single point of contact for a single, long-term plan of integrated coordinated care for children with physical and developmental needs from birth to the age of 19. The Network, which officially launches its 1-800 access to coordinated services in June, links regional healthcare, recreation, education, social and community resources from over 25 participating agencies and organizations. When fully operational, the Network will bring essential services to over 4,200 children in York and Simcoe.

According to Dr. Nicky Jones-Stokreef, a developmental paediatrician and medical director of the Child Development Program at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital who administers Aydan's botox treatments to control his muscle spasms, parents are challenged by service gaps once kids leave the preschool system. "All of a sudden they find they have to navigate a complicated system involving multiple service providers and agencies, and battle waitlists to get all the services their kids require to be in school. The Network is bridging that gap and making it easier for kids and their families to make the transition by taking the complexities out of their hands and reducing waitlists."

All of Aydan's needs for school are now being managed by a designated case manager from the Community Care Access Centre Simcoe County – a member of the Children's Treatment Network. The case manager works in partnership with the family, the Simcoe County District School Board and special education staff to arrange everything Aydan needs, including special equipment to help him sit, stand and move about and sourcing a dedicated resource teacher, as well as training school staff and setting up regular school visits by physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

"All the agencies that make up the Children's Treatment Network is providing our family and Aydan with the services we need so he can continue to have as normal a life as possible once he enters school and grow and learn as other non-challenged children do," says Cindy. "We're grateful for their support."

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