

Jacob gets his bike

Afflicted with ailment, local boy dreamed of riding a bike

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Staff Writer

It's pretty common for a 7 year-old boy to want a bike.

A bike to ride to school, to ride up and down the street with his friend— all the things everyone would consider the norm.

But when that same boy suffers from femoral facial deficiency syndrome, having a bike takes on a number of challenges.

Jacob Calvert was born with that syndrome, a condition where some bones are underdeveloped in the womb, and as a result, Jacob was born with one leg much shorter than the other.

As Jacob grew, his short leg never kept up, and consequently, by proportion, was shorter and shorter as he grew.

"As he grew," said dad Adam, "His left leg became shorter and shorter. He started with an elevated shoe, to make up the difference, then he had to go to a stilt, in which his foot was on a platform."

The stilt wasn't convenient said Adam, as Jacob had to wear baggy pants to allow it to move, and he wasn't very comfortable wearing shorts in the summer.

But one morning, while taking Jacob to the Farmer's Market in downtown Georgetown, Adam and his wife Sarah were approached by one of the Shriners there, suggesting perhaps they would send Jacob to the Shriners Hospital in Pennsylvania for an assessment.

The Calverts weren't too receptive, having established a great rapport with their doctor at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

But after some thought, they decided there was no harm in having a second opinion on how to deal with Jacob's developing problems.

"The doctors there (in Pennsylvania) were wonderful," said Sarah, "They were very straightforward and made several suggestions of approaches we could take."

Adam said the doctors were a bit surprised that they had come to Pennsylvania, after they learned of the doctor they were using at Sick Kids— he's considered one of the best in the world in that field— why would they come to Pennsylvania?

"But the doctors were quite up-front," said Adam, "And one of them said 'If he were my son, I'd be doing...' which was quite a change from our experience at Sick Kids."

The suggestion was quite radical, and the Calverts weren't

sure what to think.

"They suggested we have his short leg amputated," said Adam, "And rebuild the stump so they could fit him with a prosthetic leg."

The Calverts had some tough decisions to make, and took the suggestion back to their doctor at Sick Kids.

"The (Sick Kids) doctor agreed it was a solution that would work," said Adam, "But they hadn't suggested it before. Through War Amps, they arranged for the three of us to meet with a family in which a 12-year-old boy had a similar situation, and had the surgery. It made the decision much easier, after seeing someone who had gone through it successfully."

"When we visited them," added Sarah, "We had an opportunity to talk to the parents while the boy took Jacob aside to tell him all about having a prosthetic leg. By the time we left that meeting, we all felt it was the right decision to make."

In February of 2005, Jacob had the surgery, and after eight weeks in a body cast, he started his new life with a prosthetic leg.

"He's never looked back," said Adam, "We were so pleased with the way things went."

Although Jacob's present leg has no knee joint, he has been measured for a new leg, which he'll receive in the near future— complete with a knee joint.

But with his new mobility, Jacob started eyeing that bicycle again.

"When he was at Erin Oaks, he was told he'd never ride a bike," said Sarah, "The 'bikes' they had looked nothing at all like a typical bicycle— they were more like a wheelchair."

But during a visit to Georgetown chiropractor Dr. Gabor Madarasz, the Calverts mentioned how Jacob wanted a bike.

Madarasz was quick to respond.

"If Jacob wants a bike, then we'll build him one," said Madarasz.

Taking a number of old bikes and piecing them together, a team of volunteers, amassed by Madarasz, took it upon themselves to create a bike that would fill Jacob's needs.

Since Jacob couldn't pedal with both legs, they had to design it with one pedal, which could be used in a pumping action, and the other side was to be equipped with a footrest for his prosthetic leg. The team experimented with various adjustments, and even had to redesign the braking system, when they

'If Jacob wants a bike, then we'll build him one.'

—Gabor Madarasz



Adam Calvert aids his son Jacob as the seven-year-old tests out a new bike designed by community volunteers.

realized a back-pedal brake simply wasn't going to work for Jacob. Instead, they installed a hand brake.

Training wheels and a custom red paint job— complete with his name emblazoned on the bike— rounded out the build, and Jacob received his very own bike that he had been yearning for the past year.

"He's still trying to get the hang of it," says Adam, "And getting the balance is his biggest challenge right now."

But as time goes by, Jacob is mastering the new bike and his friends on the street think his bike is as cool as the best of them, especially being personalized with his name on it.

"Everyone has been so kind and considerate," said Sarah, "And Jacob is so excited about being able to ride his bike now. Last year we bought him an electric go-kart, but he doesn't even touch it right now— he's so pleased having his own bike."

Moore Park appeals to community for help

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She said they have a possible permanent location that will not be ready for about six to seven months, but it is not firm and there is a chance they could lose that space, so they are interested in all other options.

Read said while they have contacted real estate agents and searched the town themselves with no success, there may be an opportunity they don't know about, or one that has not yet come on the market.

"We are appealing to the Georgetown community to help us to continue to operate and with our vision to serve the children," said Read.

The board is looking for a 5,000 to 6,000 sq. ft. commercially zoned perma-

nent location in Georgetown and financial assistance from the public.

"Being a non-profit organization we do not have the \$160,000 that it would take to put first and last months rent down, pay for the 3-4 months of rent required while renovations occur and to renovate," said Read.

"Our first concern is quality care for the kids," said Judy Deamude, president of the childcare facility's board of directors. "The care and the program that these kids get there is absolutely phenomenal."

Deamude said she has contacted the offices of MP Michael Chong, MPP Ted Chudleigh and Mayor Rick Bonnette for help, but has had no success.

"Georgetown is already in need of additional quality child care spaces and we are doing everything possible to make sure that we can continue our operations to ensure that we do not lose any spaces," said Read. "We cannot do this alone and trust that the families, agencies and business community will assist us in our journey for a new location for our child care program."

Anyone with information about a potential location or interested in helping the childcare with monetary donations is asked to call Deamude at 905-877-0512 or Deamude or Read at 905-877-9314.

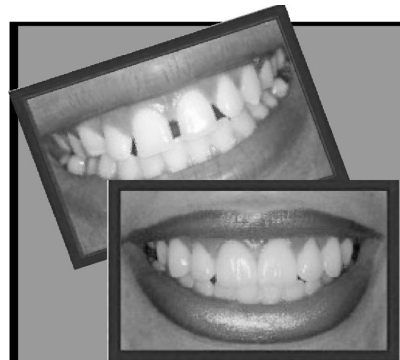
(Lisa Tallyn can be reached at ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)

Court date for Acton duo on Oct. 10

An Acton mother and daughter accused of leaving a 97-year-old relative in a vehicle on one of the hottest days of the summer are to be in court next on Tuesday, Oct. 10. Bonnie Bouclair, 60, and Kimberley Bouclair, 36, were not in Milton court Monday but were represented by a representative of the law firm Daley Byers. The Bouclairs are charged with failing to provide the necessities of life for Phyllis Arnott, who is Bonnie's mother and Kimberley's grandmother.


A set of golf clubs was taken sometime late Saturday or early Sunday from an unlocked vehicle parked at a Northridge Cr. home. The clubs included Ping irons and Cobra woods. Gloves and a jacket were also taken. Total value of the stolen items is approximately \$2,800.

Police report a \$3,000 Mercury outboard motor was taken sometime Sept. 15 from a boat stored at a Trafalgar Rd. home.



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