



# Champion COMMUNITY Page

## Local BMX racing program for challenged youths has been riding high since inception

*Instruction clinic has snowballed, thanks to volunteers and sponsors*

By **FANNIE SUNSHINE**  
*The Champion*

When Nicky Pearson started the Riders Ready BMX Program last year, her intention was to help a handful of individuals suffering from various disorders.

Now, it has turned into an ever-growing event with 23 riders and numerous volunteers.

"It all started when I saw a young boy who has Autism riding a bike," she recalled. "I realized although he couldn't play baseball, he could ride a bike at his own speed. I thought I'd bring him out to the track so he could ride there. I saw the big smile on his face and it just took off from there."

The riders — who suffer from challenges ranging from Autism to Down Syndrome — practice Wednesdays at Track 2000 from 6 to 9 p.m. and race Sundays at noon throughout the summer, Ms Pearson said.

"If you have a bike you can bring it out but it's not necessary," she said, adding a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation allowed for the purchase of 12 BMX bikes and helmets. "Riders have to wear long pants and shirts and a full face helmet."

### One-on-one instruction

The volunteers work one-on-one with the riders until they're comfortable to ride the track on their own.

"The track is 1,100 feet long with many jumps and turns. Not everyone can ride the entire thing right away."

On racing day, riders compete six at a time and all receive trophies and racing shirts, she continued.

"The youngest we have racing is four and the oldest is 17, but we'll take anyone of any age as long as they have the balance to ride a bike."

Ms Pearson, who works at Spokes 'N'

Slopes and operates the only BMX program for mentally challenged persons in Canada, said she hopes the Riders Ready BMX Program will go provincial next year and national in 2004.

"I flew to Alberta and British Columbia and told the BMX Association about the program I run and they were interested in it," she said, adding local companies Spokes 'N' Slopes, Brancier Jeweller-Gemologist Inc. and Robert Lee Insurance sponsor the program. "I hope this really takes off nation wide because the kids achieve so much."

In order for the riders to race year long, Ms Pearson is currently looking for a structure to house an indoor track.

"We need 10,000 square feet for an indoor track. If anyone has an old barn they want to lease or donate, please contact me."

Dianne Hillier, whose son Matthew inspired the Riders Ready BMX Program, told The Champion the 12-year-old has always been interested in bike riding.

"He tried team sports but couldn't keep up. This program allows him to ride at his own speed. He absolutely loves to race."

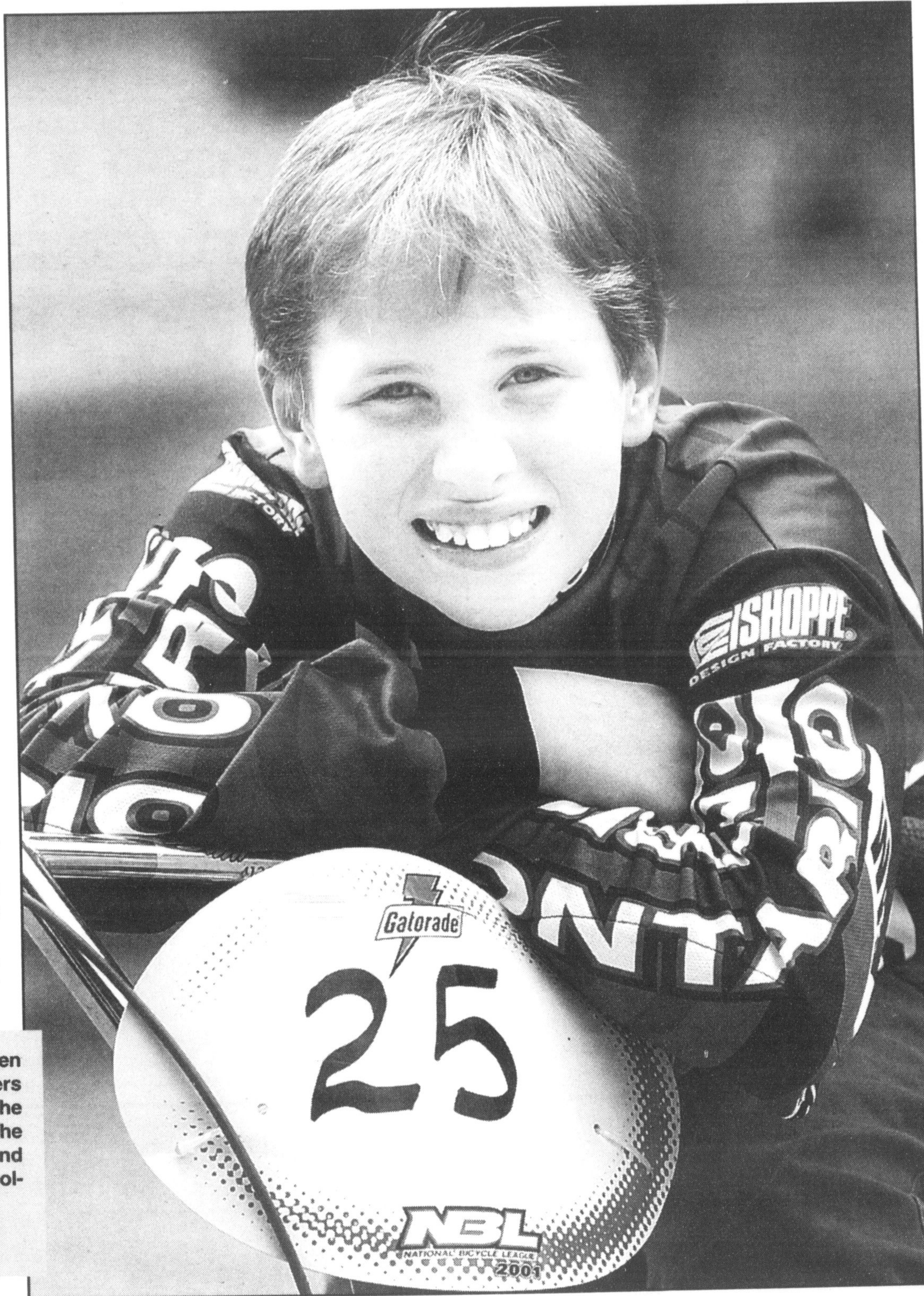
Ms Hillier, who watches every practice and race, said she sees first hand the success and accomplishment the riders achieve.

"Everyone cheers and claps and brings so much encouragement. It really brings tears to your eyes."

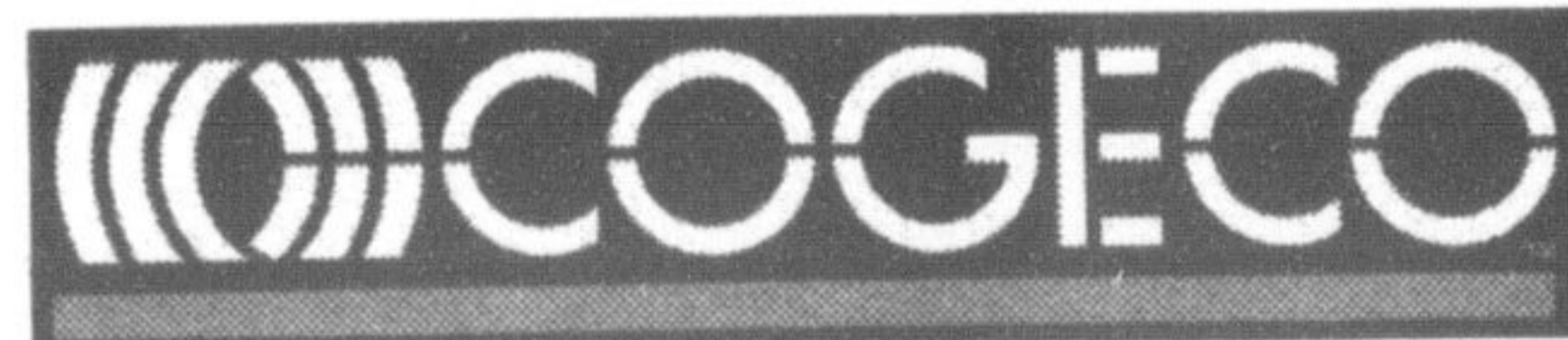
To volunteer or for more information, call Nicky Pearson at (905) 876-7676 or e-mail to [bmxmum@stn.net](mailto:bmxmum@stn.net).

**Matthew Hillier is one of two dozen youngsters with various disorders who are currently participating in the local Riders Ready BMX Program. The program is now in its second year and is enjoying strong support from volunteers and sponsors.**

Photo by **GRAHAM PAINE**



### COGECO 14 Programming Schedule — June 19th - 24th, 2002.



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Tuesday, June 18th	Wednesday, June 19th	Thursday, June 20th	Sunday, June 23rd	Monday, June 24th
9:00am Plugged In! - Late Week Edition	9:00am Plugged In! - Early Week Edition	9:00am Plugged In! - Early Week Edition	9am, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In! - Late Week Edition	9am Plugged In! - Late Week Edition
10:00am Monday Replay	10:00am Tuesday Replay	10:00am Wednesday Replay	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Late Week Edition	10am Sunday Replay
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Early Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Late Week Edition	5:30pm Money Week	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Early Week Edition
5:30pm Seniors Showcase	5:30pm Kid Connection	5:30pm Money Week	6:30pm Seniors Showcase	5:30pm With Good Taste
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	6:30pm Swap Talk (Live)	6:30pm Neighbour to Neighbour June 17, 2002	7:00pm Out Of This World	6:30pm Faces
8:00pm Halton Hills Municipal Awards & Council June 17th, 2002	7:00pm PeopleSpeak (Live)	8:00pm Halton Region Council June 19, 2002	8:00pm Neighbour to Neighbour June 17, 2002	7:00pm The Issue Is...
	8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)			8:00pm SportsZONE Live
	9:00pm Milton Council June 17th, 2002			

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