



COMMUNITY

Fundraiser planned to help disabled boy

By **Stephanie Hounsell**
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Ten-year-old Christopher Lambert may be confined to a wheelchair, but he's certainly not confined when it comes to life experiences.

The next adventure is just a car drive away. Via the family's station wagon, Christopher — who has cerebral palsy — gets around, living life to the fullest with his mom Lisa, dad Pat and seven-year-old brother, Ryan.

"He always has a smile on his face," Lisa said.

However, transporting the small boy does have its difficulties. Each time he gets in the car, the wheelchair has to be folded and Christopher has to be lifted.

If it's a day of errands, Lisa and Pat can find themselves quickly tired out by the arduous process. Add to that the even bigger problem that Christopher is quickly outgrowing his current wheelchair, and it'll soon be time for something bigger. And there's no way that bigger chair will fit in the station wagon.

What's needed is a converted van to accommodate his wheelchair, and that can cost up to \$45,000. For a single-income family whose finances are already stretched by Christopher's various therapies, that's a huge amount.

Enter family friend Charlene Naykalyk, who convinced the Lamberts to let her organize a fundraising spaghetti dinner.

"I've been watching them for years take him here and there and everywhere without complaint," Naykalyk said. "They must assemble and disassemble Christopher's wheelchair everywhere they go because it won't fit in their car otherwise. They also have to lift Christopher in and out of his car seat. They do all of this with smiles on their faces and gratitude for having Christopher in their lives."

The spaghetti dinner — one of Christopher's favourite meals — will be held Thursday, Oct. 23 from 4 to 8 p.m. at Charley Fitzwhiskeys, 55 Ontario St. N. Residents will have a chance to meet Christopher for themselves and Sneezy the Clown will also be there, donating her time.

The cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

YOUTH NEEDS YOUR HELP: Christopher Lambert flashes a smile on his porch while in the wheelchair he's quickly outgrowing.

(drinks not included), with all proceeds going toward a wheelchair accessible van.

All the meals are being donated by Charley Fitzwhiskeys.

"The reason that I wanted to help out Christopher's family is because Christopher is a beautiful boy who can put a smile on

anyone's face," Naykalyk said. "He knows more than he lets on and when you get to know him, you find that out."

Christopher was born eight weeks early and it wasn't long before his parents noticed he had limited mobility; he wasn't reaching out on his own or touching his toys.

He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy when he was nine months old. An MRI revealed there's no damage to the grey matter — where the thinking process takes place — of Christopher's brain. But there is damage to the part of the brain that sends messages to his body.

Christopher has limited use of his arms, his eyesight is damaged and he can't feed himself or grab hold of objects. He also can't operate his wheelchair on his own, and can speak only a few words, Lisa said.

Verbal communication can be tedious. He uses a system where he pushes a switch to hear various messages and pushes the switch again when he hears the one he wants to relay; he can't use a quicker communication board since he can't see well enough.

"It amazes me that he's not frustrated all the time," Lisa said. "He's the happiest child."

He loves being out and about in the community, and is very social, she said. He also has a high level of comprehension and has no problem understanding what's going on at any given time.

Christopher's life includes a flurry of appointments and therapies. Lisa learned early on she had to become an advocate for her son to receive the best care possible.

"He can't fight for himself, so if I don't do it, nobody will," she said, adding, "He's well worth it."

He has some great friends at his school, Robert Baldwin, and they often fight over who gets to push him in his wheelchair.

He might be termed non-verbal, but his family knows better than anyone that words aren't always needed to spread love — and that's an area in which Christopher doesn't have any problems.

"Christopher is so responsive and appreciative. He really is a happy, happy boy."

Those who can't attend the dinner but want to make a donation can drop off a cheque at Charley Fitzwhiskeys. Also, a trust fund has been set up at CIBC. Donations can be made at any branch (Institution number 010, transit number 07232, account number 53-08895). For more information, call Naykalyk at (905) 875-3513 or e-mail cnaykalyk@sympatico.ca.

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