



ABILITIES CENTRE

www.abilitiescentre.org

MISSION

The mission of the Abilities Centre is to create a centre that will enrich the quality of life of people with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges, which will enable them to:

- ★ increase their knowledge and confidence in what is possible
- ★ have opportunities for successful, active and full lives
- ★ develop the skills and resources needed to achieve their goals, good health and well being
- ★ be included in active lifestyles within their own communities; and
- ★ engage in activities ranging from fitness to art therapy which will further the body and the mind.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| ★ Ken Shaw, Chair | ★ Mike Ewles | ★ Nancy Shaw |
| ★ Leo Plue, Vice-Chair | ★ Ron Halliday | ★ Jennifer Ayotte, Admin. Director |
| ★ Christine Elliott, Secretary | ★ Rod Piukkala | |

Abilities Centre

500 Victoria Street West, Whitby, ON L1N 2M8

Phone: 905-665-8500 Fax: 905-665-8501

E-mail: info@abilitiescentre.org

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Charitable Registration #88981 9116 RR0001

VISION & GOALS

The **Vision** of the Abilities Centre is a commitment to the dignity of all individuals through the celebration of the abilities of children and adults with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges. The vision is of a world-class centre of excellence that will provide recreation and rehabilitation, and an environment conducive to socializing and training. This will be one of the best places in the world for children and adults with all types of needs to develop their skills. With the leadership and drive from very highly motivated and dedicated volunteers and trainers, people from around the world will be able to train for the Olympics/Paralympics and other high profile events for individuals with challenges.

The **Goals** of the Abilities Centre are as follows:

- ★ **Barrier-Free Facility:** We will create a unique learning, training, rehabilitation and recreation facility in the heart of the country for children, youth and adults with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges, regardless of medical conditions, mobility impairments, developmental, cognitive, psychiatric or social challenges.
- ★ **International Facility:** Our facility will offer top professionals, recreation equipment, suppliers and designers. We will be the most accessible place to host regional, national and international special events. We will earn an international reputation as a leader in adapted, inclusive living opportunities for all people with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges, regardless of medical conditions, mobility impairments, developmental, cognitive, psychiatric or social challenges.
- ★ **Building Partnerships:** We will build regional, provincial, national and international partnerships that promote excellence in inclusive recreation and rehabilitation programs.

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OUR COMMITMENT

The Abilities Centre is a grassroots local organization with a national and international focus. While there are other private and public recreation facilities in the community, this facility will respond to the particular need for programs for older youth and adults with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges, as services for this population are limited.

The Abilities Centre is committed to sharing best practices and information that will:

- ★ Facilitate the full inclusion of persons with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges in healthy active living opportunities.
- ★ Assist persons with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges and their families to find expedient and effective methods for maximizing independence.
- ★ Provide strategic planning for access and equipment modification (especially as it pertains to inclusive active living through barrier free design).

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FACILITIES

The Abilities Centre is designed to provide physical rehabilitation, recreational, social and educational activities, services and programs to a comprehensive range of people of all ages. The inclusiveness of these “deliverables” will be made possible due largely to the “universal” design of the building and its facilities. For instance, training tracks will possess perimeter support rails and resource areas will possess unique features to address both sight and other sensory-related impairments. Specific equipment designed to meet the strength and fitness requirements of people who have special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges and other health-care related requirements.

Programs and space that focus on music, art, drama and sensory stimulation will also be available as they offer phenomenal benefits from therapeutic, recreation and social perspectives. Furthermore, the facility will offer “life skills” training, which is especially important for youth and young adults with developmental disabilities as it addresses the concerns that soon-to-be elderly parents have with children who need daily supervised care. Being able to offer these skills and a sense of having a “second home” provides great comfort to all who may in the future find their important responsibilities exceeding their own capabilities.

This unique building will also provide meeting and conference room facilities in addition to music, arts and performing arts areas – all with universal requirements in mind. These facilities will not only serve those with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges and other health-care related requirements, they will also be a source of continuing education and training for various health care professionals who serve this growing constituency of our population.

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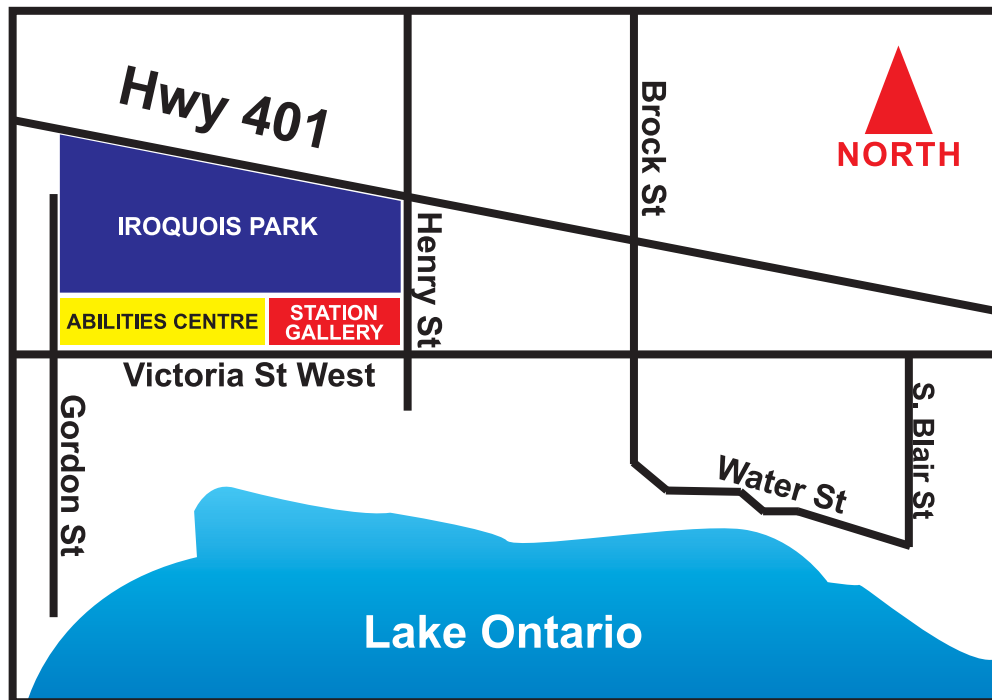
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LOCATION

The site where the Abilities Centre will be built embodies the spirit of convenient, open and efficient access for those people who have special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges and other health-care related requirements, and their families. Thanks to the generosity of the Town of Whitby, available land situated adjacent to the existing Iroquois Park Sports Centre has already been set aside for the Centre. This large new building will be able to take advantage of the tremendous facilities of the existing sports complex (e.g. pools, baseball/soccer fields, tennis courts, skating rinks and parking) and thereby be able to deliver an unparalleled diversity of programs and activities.

The property is located within 1 kilometer off Highway 401 and is right next to the Whitby GO Train station. The facility is in close proximity to the shores of Lake Ontario and an existing waterfront trail and lakefront marina and yacht club.



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CLIENTS

The Abilities Centre will be a living exhibition of inclusion. It will produce affordable, transferable best practices for centres across the country. It will provide excellence in programs for the percentage of the population who currently do not participate or maintain health maximization programs due to physical and emotional barriers they encounter.

People with special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges or other health-care related requirements, will use the facility as a focal point of information and support received from highly trained personnel who will be located and trained on the premises. This capability underscores the Abilities Centre's primary goal of becoming a global "centre of excellence" for both knowledge and insight into programming and services for people who have special needs and/or those who have a varying degree of abilities and challenges and other health-care related requirements.

By creating a facility that is specifically designed to provide a dynamic and comprehensive range of services to an unparalleled number of people with special needs and specialized health-care related requirements, the Abilities Centre will become a world-class centre of excellence for adaptive and inclusive living.

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CLIENT PROFILES

The Abilities Centre is committed to serving those with a range of challenges from a wide variety of age groups, with a focus on adolescents and adults. Some client profiles are provided to demonstrate the variety of clients who will access the programs and services of the Abilities Centre.

HISHAM

Hisham, an 11 year old Whitby resident is a winner in so many ways. Despite the physical challenges that he possesses, he recently won a gold medal in 100 metre wheelchair racing at the Ontario Paralympic Summer Championships.



Hisham has atrophy of the spine and has some feeling in his legs but has limited mobility. His parents are huge supporters of their son and go to great lengths to allow him to compete in wheelchair racing and other competitive sports. Currently, Hisham and his family must travel to Variety Village in Scarborough twice weekly in order for him to use the indoor track for training. The lack of coaches and facilities within the Durham region has severely impacted on the potential of this young athlete.

In addition to competing in the summer championships, Hisham plays wheelchair basketball, is an active member of the Whitby Steelhawks, a sledge hockey team that plays at Iroquois Park Sports Centre and is a member of Durham Hot Wheels, a sports club for people with disabilities.

Hisham looks forward to the opening of the Abilities Centre where he will be able to train and compete with fellow athletes in the quest for more gold medals for Canada!

MARI-LYNN

In January of 1998 Mari-Lynn was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Although the symptoms she was experiencing weren't serious at the time, it was very devastating news. As the disease progressed, she was forced to leave the teaching profession at the age of 35.



Mari-Lynn really struggled with this situation for the first few months until she finally came to the realization that instead of working, she would be able to fill her days with other important work. She was determined to be an advocate for other individuals with disabilities and has been an active participant on the Multiple Sclerosis Board as the Education Director. She also currently sits on the Durham Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Multiple Sclerosis affects each individual in a unique way. Although Mari-Lynn has had to deal with many "invisible" symptoms daily (fatigue, numbness, dizziness, to name a few), the only visible signs of this disease would be her use of mobility aids.

"A centre of this kind would allow people with disabilities like mine to take part in some of the activities that are often inaccessible. Although society has improved over the years to make things much more accessible, I have still been faced with many situations when I am unable to participate. A centre of this kind would open many doors for people like myself and provide us with so many worthwhile opportunities to enrich our lives."

Client profiles continued on next page.

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PATRICK

Patrick is a 13 year old young man who is an honour student at St. James Catholic School in Ajax. Patrick was born two months premature and suffered a catastrophic brain injury at birth which left him legally blind and a spastic quadriplegic. He doesn't let that stop him though!! He keeps up with his many friends with his power wheelchair and is well known for his wheelchair antics.



Patrick is a tireless volunteer for many different children's charities and has been since he was a very young child. He says he enjoys doing so because it makes him feel like a valuable member of society and not just someone who always requires help but someone who is willing to help.

Patrick enjoys swimming and playing a wide variety of adaptive sports. He currently must travel into Toronto to access any of these programs and this is difficult given the fact that Patrick comes from a family with eight children, seven of whom have special needs. He is looking forward to playing wheelchair hockey with his siblings and an open space where they can race their wheelchairs.

Patrick eagerly anticipates the construction of the Abilities Centre so that he, along with his siblings and friends, can access the inclusive recreation "right in his own backyard." Patrick's cardiovascular health is largely dependant on whether he can access fitness programs so it is not just good for his spirits but also his body.

ROBERT

Bob has been a resident of Oshawa for more than 40 years and has retired from a productive career at General Motors. Over the past few years, Bob suffered from heart problems and encountered a couple of heart attacks as a result of blocked arteries.



Bob needed to make significant and immediate changes to his diet and physical activity to ensure survival. His current regimen includes a focus on nutrition and healthy eating, along with daily physical activity. Bob never gave much thought to reading food labels, but today this is an important part of his daily focus on a healthy diet. In addition, he needed to reduce the amount of fat and sugar in his diet. He walks 3 km a day, five days a week to maintain his physical well being.

In his 'spare' time as a retiree, Bob is on the Organizing Committee for the Walk of Life, Lakeridge Health Oshawa, and has been a volunteer for the past two years at Camp Scugog – a summer camp for disadvantaged children. He gets much pleasure from spending time with children of all ages in teaching them how to fish!

Bob says that the Abilities Centre will "provide any person who has had heart problems with an indoor facility that will allow them to exercise – swim, walk, or work out using the machines".

STEPHANIE

Stephanie had her first seizure when she was 4 months old and over the next 18 months, she would have about 2000 seizures. A diagnosis of 'West Syndrome' would leave her severely mentally challenged for the rest of her life.



Stephanie is now 15 years old but has the purity of spirit of a 2 year old. She continues to have seizures, but has not lost any zest for life as exhibited with 'squeals of delight' when presented with new discoveries!

Stephanie loves life – she loves to play, walk, swim, ride horseback, attend school, and spend time with her dog. Her desire to socialize, play, exercise and learn life skills to further her independence are the key assets of the Abilities Centre. A facility designed for Stephanie and the thousands of other people who face similar challenges will be life altering.

The Abilities Centre will be a "safe, barrier free environment that includes the latest in equipment where Stephanie and others will be able to socialize and participate inclusively with peers, friends and family".