

# The Joshua Walker Scholarship Fund for Children with Special Needs

By Michelle Jacques, Director  
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Josh Walker came to *Kindermusik Village* classes at the Kindermusik of Cambridge studio for a year or so, on and off, when and if he could make it. Mrs. Beretta, Mrs. Carbone and myself were fortunate to have the honour of being Josh's teacher at one time or another. A good semester for Josh was to be able to attend about 4 classes out of 8. Josh's mom, Lisa, explains...

*"Josh was born a month early and hard to believe, he was my biggest baby! But the womb proved to be the best place for Josh to grow as he didn't grow much after that. Josh was diagnosed about 3 months after he was born. His problems started with a quickly identified cardiac condition, into which a series of other issues resulted. He stopped feeding, lost muscle tone and his vision, and developed a serious seizure disorder. The combination of medical complications meant that he would require 13 different medications per day including morphine every 4 hours to manage pain. He had 3 surgeries before he was 4 months old, one of which was to place a G-tube through to his stomach for direct 24-hour feeds.*

*"Joshua was soon diagnosed with Mitochondrial Cytopathy, which is a very rare, degenerative disease that affects people in extremely different ways. Mitochondria are small components that are present in almost every cell in the human body and are responsible for transporting "energy" to the cell. When they are defective, the cell cannot perform its function. Joshua had defective mitochondria in his brain, muscles, G.I. system and his heart. He underwent enormous amounts of genetic testing, yet we still were never able to identify the genetic mutation or deletion responsible for the disease. So we really only have a 99% diagnosis. This disease usually presents in the teen years and early 20's, so for us to have secured a clear diagnosis would have been huge given the implications that still exist for Joshua's older sisters, Victoria and Alivia.*

*"In Joshua's last 9 months or so, he developed pneumonia a few times which weakened his system and created scar tissue in his lungs. In September 2002 at the age of 3½, Josh died due to respiratory distress. We were told we would only have Joshua for about a year... how lucky were we that he was such a tough cookie and that we were able to love him for an extra 2 1/2 years!*

*"Joshua brought us all so many gifts and I learned a great deal about myself during his lifetime. It would have been easy to get clouded in the difficulties of managing a medically fragile child, but for me, he was a daily reminder of what I think is most important in life: gratitude. I would look at him with all his many struggles and say to myself "If this little angel can find a reason to smile, we all sure can." He was, and always will be my hero."*

Kindermusik provided a unique opportunity for Josh and Lisa to spend rare quality time together. Lisa says, *"I can't express how important Kindermusik became for both Joshua and I. His medical fragility made it impossible for us to consider any other kind of children's program. Kindermusik gave us the ONLY special one on one program where we could play, dance, sing and be "normal" for a short time. Please know how grateful I am for your part in creating these memories for me which were made possible by your relaxed, flexible approach to teaching and the graceful, respectful manner in which you allowed us to participate in whatever way we could."*

Funding for Josh's participation in Kindermusik came from grants generously provided by the IODE, Preston Chapter. With the growing number of children with developmental and physical challenges that we have attending Kindermusik classes, the time came for local educators to create a scholarship fund that would be available exclusively to families in this community. Joshua Walker in his short life made such a lasting impression on everyone he came in contact with. It was only fitting that the new scholarship program be set up in his name. Through the continued generous contributions of Kindermusik parents at our annual Family Night and through an end-of-semester teacher gift program, along with a community campaign, which generate funds from local companies and organizations, currently between 10-15 children per year receive scholarships for their Kindermusik tuition, all because of Josh.

Lisa is thrilled about the **Joshua Walker Scholarship Fund for Children with Special Needs** and summed up her feelings in this way, *"Thank you for including Joshua and his memory into your Kindermusik plan for other children with special needs. It was such an honour and a privilege raising Joshua and so very special to know that his memory continues to have a positive impact on our community."*



Joshua (at age 2½) with mom, Lisa  
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## The Benefits of Kindermusik for a Child With Special Needs

- ❖ Small group classes, therefore lots of individual attention;
- ❖ Child experiences the beauty and joy of music making with his/her peers;
- ❖ Aids physical development through a systematic, step-by-step, balanced blend of movement activities for refining fine and gross motor skills;
- ❖ Aids sensory development and perception by stimulating multiple senses (listening, seeing, touching);
- ❖ Aids emotional development by learning to express and convey feelings using parts of the body or the whole body;
- ❖ Aids social development by fostering confidence and self-assurance in small groups;
- ❖ Develops and provides an outlet for imagination and creativity;
- ❖ Participation is at a pace that is appropriate for each child—in his or her own way and own time;
- ❖ Family participation in class and at home allows the family to grow musically together;
- ❖ Kindermusik CDs and Home Activities supplement speech or occupational therapy services and bring the classroom into the home even when the child can't be there;
- ❖ It's fun! – time away from stressful treatments and therapy.