



HABILITAS
foundation

Good News



Photo: Fondation des sports adaptés

A Lifetime of Summer Memories

"Camp Massawippi has been such an important part of our daughter Alexandra's life. Alex has been attending Camp Massawippi every summer since she was eight years old, and she looks forward each year to returning and sharing her favourite moments with the campers and counsellors in her 'happy place.'"

Alex enjoys all the water sports that camp offers, especially water-skiing which she only wishes she could do every day! Singing and camp announcements are other joyful moments – she sings the songs at home all the time.

Camp Massawippi has provided a welcome respite for us as parents in the summer. It gives us the chance to spend quality time at our cottage, as well as the opportunity to spend more active time with our other three children. We appreciate all the care and love the camp has provided to Alex throughout her life, and feel happy and confident that the camp provides a safe and caring environment for Alex to enjoy her summers."

- Robin, Alexandra's mom



As the official foundation of Camp Massawippi, Habilitas Foundation believes that every child deserves to experience the joy of a summer spent in nature, and the freedom to wake up in a world where possibilities are limited only by the number of hours in a day. Donor generosity is making this dream a reality, one camper at a time.

Message from Habilitas Leadership



Dearest friends,

As we embrace the warmer weather and the promise of sunshine and longer days, we are reminded of how important recreation, connection, and community are—especially for individuals and families impacted by our work and that of our partners. Thanks to donor generosity, the programs we fund continue to create meaningful opportunities for people of all ages living with physical disabilities and sensory impairments.

Children are building confidence and skills at adapted camps; adults are forging lifelong friendships through supported recreational opportunities; and parents are receiving the respite they need in order to best support their loved ones. The services offered by those we fund

are more than just activities, they are programs that empower and uplift.

Summer is a time for adventure, for new experiences, and for growth, and we are proud to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, has the chance to fully participate.

None of this happens without your support, and for that, we are truly grateful.

Thank you for helping to make this possible!

Pictured above: Back row, Matthew Chaussé (Chair, Habilitas Foundation Board of Directors), Theodora Brinckman (Executive Director, Habilitas Foundation) Front row, Arlene Fels (client in cochlear implant program and foundation donor).

Gearing Up for Summer Freedom

As the weather gets warmer and the days grow longer, you'll likely see motorcycles start to reappear on roads and highways across the province. But for some, the dream of riding again—or for the first time—seems out of reach after an accident or the onset of a physical disability.

“We believe that with the right adaptations and training, riding a motorcycle is possible for just about anyone,” says Kristian Thivierge, occupational therapist in the Driving Evaluation and Vehicle Adaptation Program at the Constance-Lethbridge Centre.

“Whether it’s moving essential controls like the clutch, brake, or starter to the handlebars, adding a third wheel for stability, or tailoring the seating to accommodate a prosthetic, each motorcycle is customized to give the rider back their freedom,” explains Kristian.

“I’ll never forget the words of one grateful rider: ‘When I’m in my wheelchair, people look at me differently. But on my bike—no one can tell I have a disability.’

“Our clients aren’t just learning to drive—they’re reclaiming a vital part of themselves. Many say getting back on a bike has helped them feel “normal” again. It’s not just about the ride—it’s about restoring autonomy, dignity, and a sense of belonging.

There’s no greater reward than seeing the spark in someone’s eyes when they realize what they’re capable of—when something they thought was lost becomes possible again.”

Each year, this program works with approximately 400 people from across Quebec.

Through donor support, Habilitas Foundation is able to help elevate the quality of care at Constance-Lethbridge. Together, we’re not just providing services—we’re giving people with physical disabilities the tools they need to live with independence and dignity.

At left: Alyssa Merilees (clinical coordinator) and Kristian Thivierge (occupational therapist) with the new training motorcycle



Summer Adventures Without Limits

For many members of the Action Centre—90% of whom use wheelchairs full-time—the logistics, support, and financial burden required to plan an accessible outing can make simple pleasures feel out of reach.

That's why the Action Centre's team takes care of it all. From arranging adapted transportation and making reservations to assessing accessibility and accommodating dietary needs, every detail is thoughtfully handled.

These outings offer more than just a change of scenery. They bring a sense of freedom, connection, and joy—allowing members to explore their community in a safe, supportive environment. They also help build

friendships and expand social circles in meaningful ways.

Last summer, 31 Action Centre members set off on a guided boat cruise along the St. Lawrence River, followed by a picnic in Old Montreal. More than a sightseeing trip, it was a chance to share laughter, discover new perspectives on their city—and a chance to share in something special.

Like every outing, this was more than just a trip. It was a moment of joy, of connection, and of being fully present in the world. Most of all, it sent a powerful message to participants: that everyone, regardless of their mobility or challenges, deserves the chance to experience life's simple pleasures.

For over 20 years, the Action Centre has provided a welcoming, inclusive space for adults with physical and cognitive disabilities. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the Habilitas Foundation proudly supports this mission—ensuring that every member has the chance to experience life to the fullest.



Where Summer Break Means Breaking New Ground

The MAB-Mackay is always full of life, but when school lets out for the summer, the energy shifts into something truly special. The halls buzz with laughter and determination as children take part in unique day camps designed not only for fun, but to help them build essential skills for greater independence.

It began over a decade ago with the launch of the *Constraint-Induced Movement Therapy Day Camp*. For three weeks, children with neurological conditions affecting one side of their body participate in classic camp activities like arts and crafts, sports, and scavenger hunts. But there's a key difference: their stronger arm is gently restrained for most of the day, encouraging use of their non-dominant side.

This approach helps their bodies and brains adapt, forging new neural pathways that improve coordination.

Building on this success, other specialized camps were introduced, including:

- a camp for children with visual impairments, helping them prepare for school with skills like cutting, writing, and navigating classrooms using their low-vision aids;
- a camp for children with hearing aids and cochlear implants, focused on developing language, communication, and self-confidence;
- a camp for children with a developmental coordination disorder, offering hands-on practice with everyday tasks like brushing teeth or using cutlery, improving motor planning and independence.

"Summer is the perfect time for these programs," explains Isabelle Cormier, program manager for children aged 8–21. "Without the demands of school, the kids are more engaged and motivated. We can also measure progress in real-time. The skills and self-assurance they develop here stay with them long after the summer ends."

These therapeutic camps are offered at no cost to families. Thanks to generous donor support, the Habilitas Foundation is able to provide the specialized staff, adaptive equipment, and materials needed to run these life-changing programs.



Wherever Summer Leads in Montreal

With summer at our doorstep, the parks, sidewalks, trails and outdoor markets across our city are bustling. People walking, biking, on roller blades, skateboards – as well as those using white canes. Each step that white cane users take represents not only independence but also the result of dedicated training in Orientation and Mobility— a skillset that is essential for individuals who are blind or have visual impairments.

“Summer is an especially valuable time for Orientation and Mobility training,” says Marie-Noëlle, who is a member of a team of seven instructors in this vital discipline at the Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (MAB Site). “We’re able to practice in a wider range of environments that provide real-world learning experiences. I work with clients on planning bus routes, safely crossing busy intersections, and mastering their cane techniques so they can confidently meet friends at parks, festivals, and community spaces.”

For more than 50 years, the Centre has been at the forefront of providing this specialized instruction, empowering people who are blind or visually impaired to navigate the world safely and with confidence. At its core, Orientation and Mobility training focuses on two key aspects; **orientation**, or knowing where you are and where you want to go; and **mobility**, or the ability to travel safely and efficiently using a white cane along with other senses and environmental cues, in all conditions and situations – in inclement weather, in crowds, in daylight or at nighttime.

Generous donor support for the Habilitas Foundation makes important skills training such as Orientation and Mobility possible. It also allows us to fund the Low Vision Clinic, the Day Centre for seniors, and the Technical Aids Boutique.



“Facing the world with a visual impairment felt intimidating, especially the thought of using a white cane. With Kate, my Orientation and Mobility instructor by my side, I took that courageous first step. As I adapted to new techniques, crossing streets and exploring my favourite spots became empowering.

Montreal’s vibrant life opened up to me again. Being out in the world on my own terms has allowed me to reconnect with my true self and reclaim the bold, dynamic personality I had before.”

*—Maryam,
long-time MAB-Mackay client*



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Learn more about our work at habilitas.ca

