



#UNSTOPPABLE

EASTER SEALS KIDS ARE UNSTOPPABLE

The world can be a different place for a child living with a disability—a different experience to access the everyday routines and rhythms of life.

What might seem easy and automatic for many of us as we move through our daily lives - for someone with a disability - facing additional challenges, barriers and obstacles makes life anything but simple. And for their parents, the additional financial burdens impact the entire family.

The reality is this - having a disability can severely limit a person's ability to access their world and enjoy the same experiences as their able-bodied peers. For many, a disability can even affect how they see themselves and how they view their own abilities. It can lead to lower self-confidence and self-esteem which can cause them to doubt their potential and their ability to contribute positively to their community.

But in many cases, these kids meet their challenges head on – and become remarkable human beings, achieving great success and accomplishments. With a lot of perseverance, support from their families and some help from Easter Seals, they can become UnstoppABLE!

The *Unstoppable Campaign* features the accomplishments of three young people who have grown up with support from Easter Seals. Brandon Liston is a confident and charismatic speaker thanks to his role as Easter Seals National Ambassador. Zak Madell is a Paralympic wheelchair rugby athlete who, after only one year in the sport, led Team Canada to a silver medal at the 2012 London Paralympics. Victoria Chen is a top student, an accomplished pianist and a former Provincial Ambassador for Easter Seals Ontario.



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BRANDON LISTON

Some kids dream of leading the country one day. For Brandon Liston this dream might actually happen.

At 16 years old, Brandon is already a seasoned Easter Seals Ambassador, having served in New Brunswick when he was six years old until the age of ten. Now he is making history, officially becoming Easter Seals' first National Ambassador. Brandon travels to key events across the country to speak on behalf of Easter Seals kids.

This is the second time the native of Fredericton has made history. He is the youngest recipient of the Rotary Club of Fredericton's Paul Harris Fellowship. The award, which acknowledges 'service above self', is the highest honour a Rotary Club can bestow on a person.

Brandon is articulate and passionate, and willing to take on challenges—first public speaking and then rock climbing, sit-skiing and tubing down a challenging hill.

He also has a great sense of humour. With the help of a friend, Brandon plans to launch a web series called 'Brandon's Epic Adventures', which will chronicle his hilarious attempts at daunting activities, complete with live action shots, interviews and bloopers.

When asked what he wants to be as an adult, Brandon answers before the question finishes. "I have two options and I'm not going to stop until I achieved one of the two," he says. "My number one option is to join the political ranks—as mayor, MP, MLA or maybe even Prime Minister. My other option is to join Easter Seals as CEO, so I can keep making smiles happen for kids with disabilities."

Brandon knows a thing or two about smiles and Easter Seals. For him, the two go hand-in-hand. Brandon has cerebral palsy, which affects his right leg and arm. He uses a walker primarily to get around, and a wheelchair for longer distances.

When he needs to replace a walker he has outgrown, he and his Gran, Terry, turn to Easter Seals New Brunswick, which provides long-term loans of personal assistive equipment free of charge. This service is a god-send for parents of children with disabilities. Bringing up a child with a disability can be incredibly expensive if not for the support of Easter Seals and government programs. Easter Seals offers more than invaluable equipment loans for children and families. It ensures that children of all abilities have access to active living opportunities, through sports, social activities and summer camp.



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Easter Seals' signature camp program has been putting smiles on the faces of young Canadians with disabilities for decades. Every year, thousands of children challenge themselves while having the time of their lives at 14 Easter Seals camps nationwide. Brandon attends Camp Rotary at Grand Lake in New Brunswick.

"I really love Camp Rotary, especially because it's accessible. I could go to other camps but how would I get around? When you are there, everyone knows what you're going through, and you don't feel like you have a disability. You are not set apart from everyone, as you are in everyday life."

Brandon's favourite activity at camp is swimming.

"I love the water. It relaxes my muscles. I can walk without the walker because of the buoyancy. When you get in the water, it's like being in a whole other dimension."

Brandon also participates in Easter Seals New Brunswick's Abilities Program, which offers kids opportunities to participate in sports such as sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball and sit-ski, as well as rock climbing and leisure activities. The program not only provides opportunities for kids with disabilities to get active and socialize, it builds infrastructure in the community to accommodate people of all abilities.

For Brandon, the Ambassador program has changed his life.

"The Ambassador Program has given me so much courage and so much of a start for the future because it really speaks to me," says Brandon. "When I first started, I was really nervous speaking in public. As I grew older and matured more, it got easier. Now look at me."

Brandon now speaks at public events without the use of notes. His message is powerful. As National Ambassador for Century 21 Canada, one of Easter Seals' longstanding corporate partners, Brandon enjoys rallying people to become supporters of Easter Seals kids.

"I don't consider people with disabilities as disabled. 'Dis' means you can't do something. Look at me. I'm able to walk too. I just do it a little differently. I am differently-abled."

For Brandon, 'can't' is a bad word. It's an important message, and one delivered by Canada's future Prime Minister, or MP, MLA, CEO, or whoever he chooses to be.

Brandon Liston—simply unstoppABLE!



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ZAK MADELL

Meet Zak Madell—Paralympic silver medallist, World Championships silver medalist, Parapan Am Games gold medallist, and former Easter Seals support recipient.

At the age of 10, Zak developed a bacterial infection which spread throughout his system causing septic shock. His body was able to protect his brain and heart, but other organs suffered the effects of the toxins and lack of oxygen. Much of his tissue was severely damaged, and as a result, he required amputation of his legs and fingers.

Following his recovery, Zak attended Easter Seals Camp Horizon in Bragg Creek Alberta – a specialized, fully-accessible camp that provides outdoor adventure based programs for children and adults with disabilities and medical conditions. The experience at Camp allowed Zak to participate in all kinds of activities, and gave him the support, encouragement and confidence he needed to try new things and embrace new opportunities. In 2009 at the age of 15, Zak was named the Easter Seals Youth Ambassador for Southern Alberta.

Growing up, Zak had a passion for contact sports, and that didn't change after he lost his legs and fingers. Six months after he got out of the hospital, Zak was on the hunt for a sport to play—one that appealed to his competitive nature and love of speed. Zak first tried sledge hockey, but was unable to hold the stick well enough to really progress in the sport.

Next, he tried wheelchair basketball—a sport in which he competed at a high level, playing for Team Alberta at the 2011 Canada Winter Games. But once again, his lack of fingers limited his progression up the national ranks.

Despite this set back, Zak was undeterred and continued to persevere. In 2011, at the age of 16, Zak was introduced to wheelchair rugby—a sport popularized by the 2005 documentary aptly named, “Murderball.” He immediately excelled in the high-speed, full-contact sport and shot up the national and international rankings, often being referred to as a “phenom” in the sport.

Despite having played for just over a year, Zak earned a spot on Team Canada for the 2012 London Paralympic Games. His incredible performance under the pressure of the Paralympic stage lifted Canada to victory in its semi-final upset of the number one-ranked American team, before narrowly losing in the finals to the powerhouse Australian team and capturing the silver medal.

Since his debut in the sport, “The Kid”, as he became known, has established himself as one of the best wheelchair rugby players in the world. He was named MVP of the 2014 World Wheelchair Rugby



Championships in Odense, Denmark; the 2014 Canada Cup International Wheelchair Rugby Tournament; and the 2015 World Wheelchair Rugby Challenge. His biggest honor came when he was named Canada's flagbearer for the Closing Ceremony of the Toronto 2015 Parapan American Games, after leading Team Canada to its first gold medal in 13 years as the team's top scorer.

Zak Madell—simply unstoppABLE!

VICTORIA CHEN

Meet Victoria Chen—multi-talented musician, top student, advocate for children and youth living with disabilities, and Easter Seals support recipient.

An only child, Victoria was initially diagnosed with unspecified spinal cord damage which was later defined as transverse myelitis. As a result, her lower extremities are fragile and she has difficulty with balance. "I can't walk without using a mobility device," says Victoria. "I get tired easily by standing or walking and I feel sore in my muscles, especially in my back. When I go out, I sometimes need to sit in a transport chair and have my parents push the chair around. Otherwise, I get too tired to do anything else."

Victoria wears ankle foot orthotics on both feet and uses forearm crutches to walk short distances and a walker for longer distances.

Despite her disability, Victoria enjoys life to the fullest. She is incredibly active at school and participates in a variety of extracurricular activities, including school bands, choirs and the Peel District Honour Bands and Jazz Bands. Victoria is an enthusiastic student who foresees a career in the medical field where she can help people, especially children, live a better life.

Victoria is also an multi-talented musician, having mastered the piano, flute, saxophone, guitar and ukulele. She credits music with helping her "grow into a more interactive, capable and confident person, making [her] feel energized and alive."

Victoria and her family have benefited from a number of Easter Seals services and programs, such as the Recreational Choices Funding Program, attending special events and accessing information and resources that are important for her family.

In 2015, at the age of 15, Victoria was selected as the Easter Seals Ontario Provincial Ambassador, a role that fulfilled her desire to advocate for—and give back to—the organization that helped her and



her family so much. Victoria relished her time as Easter Seals Ontario Provincial Ambassador and took advantage of any opportunity to meet people who support her cause across Ontario. The role also gave Victoria the poise and confidence to speak and perform as a musician in public—something that has helped Victoria immensely in her life.