



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cameron's Crusade Gives the Gift of Mobility

Madison Heights, Michigan - Japhet School, the award-winning school in Madison Heights, is celebrating a successful service project for Cameron Wasiluk, a Warren boy with special needs who is the son of one of the school's teachers. With support from the Japhet community, "Cameron's Crusade" resulted in the purchase of a gait trainer, wheelchair lift for the family's vehicle, and swing. Together these pieces give Cameron the gift of mobility, adding to his quality of life.

"We are immensely grateful to everyone who took part in Cameron's Crusade and helped to get the equipment needed to improve his quality of life and our ability to best care for him," says Julia Wasiluk, Cameron's mother and Japhet teacher. "The gait trainer allows Cameron to spend lots of time safely on his feet, and the wheelchair lift is such a gift, after years of lifting the heavy wheelchair ourselves. We have felt an outpouring of love and support from the entire Japhet community. The most touching thing has been seeing the Japhet students' care and concern for Cameron. They make sure they greet Cameron, touch his hand, or give him words of encouragement. That is a wonderful thing. It brings tears to my eyes each time I witness it. We can't thank Japhet community enough for all they have done for our family."

Japhet School launched Cameron's Crusade in February 2011 when teachers, parents, and students began planning special events to raise money. A bowling night, science presentation, talent show, restaurant outing, and a used book sale took place throughout spring, and even individual Japhet School children brought monies donated from their birthday parties (requested in lieu of gifts) to the school. In all, the school raised more than \$6,000, which was enough to purchase the three most needed items. Students understood what a wheelchair lift and indoor swing were, and learned that a gait trainer is a special device that enables a non-walking person to use his or her legs to "walk" with safe, full-body support.

"We are grateful that the Wasiluk family found Japhet, for not only did we gain a family but also a talented and experienced teacher," says Cathy Mohan, Head of School. Julia teaches middle school math, helps in Early Childhood, and serves as a substitute. "We are glad that as a community we have made a positive difference for them, too."

Cameron's Story

"Cameron was a healthy little boy who was full of life," says Julia. "He enjoyed catching bugs, reading, drawing, and anything scary. He dreamed of becoming a knight when he grew up. He was full of compassion for others and a delightful sense of humor." When he was 5, Cameron became ill with a common virus. Within just two months and without much explanation,

Cameron began suffering extreme seizures daily. He was in a coma, was in the ICU for months, and the seizures kept coming. Ultimately to save his life, Cameron's doctors needed to remove part of his brain.

Today Cameron has severe epilepsy and still has seizures, although they are less frequent. He is non-verbal, cortically blind, and has developed osteoporosis, making him susceptible to fractures. "The day-to-day life with a special needs child throws us many challenges," says Julia, who works tirelessly to gain public services to which Cameron is entitled. The most critical need, which inspired the creation of Cameron's Crusade, was finding a way to support his mobility because Cameron is no longer a small child able to be carried. "While almost every aspect of life has changed for us, we are thankful every single day for Cameron and his sister, Grace, and all the love they bring us, and for all the wonderful people who have helped us along this difficult journey."

About Japhet School:

Founded in 1973, Japhet School is an independent school, serving children the metropolitan Detroit area in preschool through eighth grade. Its mission is to nurture and prepare each child for life by integrating character education with a strong academic program. The school provides small classes of fewer than 20 students in each, which enables teachers to challenge students with academic material that is appropriate for their intellectual readiness, regardless of age or grade. Integrated with strong academics is Japhet School's national award-winning character education curriculum, which builds a peaceful community within the school and creates leaders with integrity. Japhet is a National School of Character, and was the first school in Michigan -- and the first independent school in the country -- to receive this award. To learn more about Japhet, visit www.japhetschool.org.

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SUGGESTED CAPTION: Cameron Wasiluk, 11 YO of Warren, now uses his brand new "gait trainer" every day with eagerness and energy (add if use photo above: with the help of his sister, Grace). The gift of this device, along with a wheelchair lift and indoor swing, are the result of Japhet School's "Cameron's Crusade" service project.