

Town Library has been sharing the spirit of the Games with a short story contest



The winners in the Caledon Public Library short story contest were recognized at the recent Caledon Day festivities.

In keeping with the spirit of the upcoming Pan Am Games, Caledon Public Library hosted a short-story writing contest. Winners, according to various age categories, were recognized at the recent Caledon Day festivities. Here are some of the winning entries.

Pachi

By Chisom Ochuba
and Darsh Kadakiav
Children 6-9

Pachi was a fuzzy porcupine who always waved to people and gave hugs and high-fives. He practised doing lots of dances and cheers. He spent a lot of time telling everybody to come to the Pan Am and Para Pan Am Games. He had 41 spikes on his back. He couldn't wait for 41 countries to come to Canada and take part in the Pan Am and Para Pan Am Games. He loved being a mascot. Pachi was a good mascot, but one day he thought it would be fun to be an athlete. He wanted to win a shiny medal and he dreamed about all the children and his friends being around him and cheering for him.

Pachi visited fairs and markets and special events around his community. He worked really hard every day to get ready. He would always go home and have a big glass of milk and dream about being an athlete.

For Pachi's eighth birthday he got a pair of Nike shoes from his parents. After he ate his cake, he put on his Nike shoes and started to run really fast. He could run faster than all of his friends. He could run faster than his parents. He could even run faster than Usane Bolt.

Some people heard about how fast Pachi could run. Pachi knew how to cheer, he knew how to hug and give high-fives, but he didn't know anything about being a runner and an athlete. He would have to get some help.

Pachi asked his dad to help him. Pachi was a fast learner. He was already a very fast runner, but he learned some new skills on how to start fast. He learned that he had to be dedicated and he learned that he had to train every day. He couldn't play with his friends as much as he use to and he had to start eating really healthy foods and lots of vegetables.

He ran to school and he ran home from school. He ran to the store and he ran to his friend's house. Pachi ran everywhere. No one could catch him. He won every race that he entered. When his friends ran up to him, he would run away from them. When little kids ran up to him, he would run away from them.

Then, Pachi started feeling very lonely. He missed his friends. He missed getting hugs and high-fives from all the kids and he missed cheering for the athletes.

Then, he started thinking that running should be the job for the athletes and hugs and high-fives should be the job of the mascots. He loved being a mascot and cheering the athletes on.

He took off his running shoes and started counting down the days until the Pan Am Games and Para Pan Am Games would be coming to Toronto. He wanted to watch all the events and he couldn't wait to welcome the 41 countries of the world to Canada. Pachi wanted to be the best mascot ever!!!

Dash and the Pan Am Games!

By Clare Bamford

Children 9-12

Hi! My name is Dash. I'm a Palomino horse and I live on a farm. I know I don't sound like much, but this is the story where I prove I'm very special!

My owner Lucy, a bubbly 11 year-old girl, came out to feed me. I love Lucy, because she loves me! We go on trail rides together, we jump courses together, and we even compete in small community competitions together! As she walked up to the fence, I gave her a friendly whinny.

"Hey boy," she said, stroking my mane.

"Want to go jump?" she asked.

I gave her a long whinny, which meant yes. So she led me to the tack shed. She tacked me up and just had to say the word "Jumps!" and I know to go to our makeshift jumps Lucy had set up. Jumping the course calmed me. Lucy led me to the first jump, two cardboard boxes stacked on top of each other, and I jumped over it without any problems. I could feel the wind in my mane! We road over to the next jump, an old refrigerator box, and I jumped it, again with ease. "Good boy Dash!" Lucy called to me.

I felt happy, impressing my girl. We went through all the jumps, and at the end, a taller human girl stood there, clapping. I know she was Lucy's sister.

"Hey Lucy! I've got some big news! I'm competing in the Pan Am Games! In the equestrian jumping! I would like to use Dash to compete with! I already filled out forms, so Lucy; can I use him in the race?" The Lucy sister asked.

I hear my name and Lucy got excited. She said yes, and then told me what was happening. That I was going to compete in the Pan Am games. I didn't exactly know what the Pan Am games were, but I loved competing! Then, the Lucy sister got on my back. I was confused. But Lucy said it was good, so I let the Lucy sister stay. She told me to jump, so I trotted to the first box. She led me through the course smoothly. We did this every day for a long time.

Then, one morning, the Lucy sister and Lucy led me out of the fence. It was still dark out, and I was tired. They led me to a big horse trailer. I was confused. But, Lucy was there, so I knew it was fine. She gave me three apples and closed the trailer door. Then, it started moving. It felt weird. It went on until finally it stopped. Lucy led me out of the trailer. Then, the Lucy sister tacked me up. The Lucy sister was wearing competing clothes. I knew because Lucy wore those clothes when competing. Oh yeah! We were competing! Lucy stroked my mane, and I gave her a soft, happy whinny. Then, the Lucy sister said "jumps" but I didn't know what she meant. This wasn't home. I didn't know where the jumps were. Then, Lucy led me to a door. She opened the huge door and it led to an arena. Lots of humans were sitting around the arena, and I saw a bunch of big jumps! I whinnied with delight and trotted to the closest jump.

"Go!" I heard a human voice yell. "Giddy up Dash!" the Lucy sister said to me. So I dashed (my name exactly) to the first jump. I leaped over it, and then ran to the second jump, then the third, then the fourth. Each one I jumped. I jumped over a bunch of jumps, I couldn't count how many. The Lucy sister guided me to all the jumps. I loved the wind in my mane! I heard human voices cheering! And then, I heard one distinct voice yell; "Go Dash! Go Dasher!"

Lucy was cheering for me! So I ran full speed to the last jump! I got to the jump and . . . leaped over it perfectly! The crowd went wild! I whinnied happily. Lucy ran up to me and threw her arms around my neck. I whinnied softly in her ear, and she laughed. The Lucy sister got off me and walked to a group of other people. A man walked onto a podium. "The judges have chosen the winners! And first place goes to Hailey and Dash!"

Lucy hugged me! I whinnied happily! I Won! I Won!

Fly

By Uche Ochuba

Teen class

On you mark.

I took a breath.

Set.

Everything became slow motion as the gun went off. I had a perfect start and I could feel myself accelerating.

Twenty km/h ? 30 ? 40?

I was only fifteen. Yes, it was in 2011 when everyone first saw it. It was the 100-metre sprint during the local public sports festival. Wait. Rewind. My name is Emmet. I was never really the fastest, or the strongest, or the tallest as a kid. Despite this, I always wanted to do something bigger, better. I wanted to fly. So badly, that I jumped off my friend's roof and attached ?rocket boosters? to my bike which I found out were oil-burning lanterns. Both of these instances resulted in failure, injury and/or tragic loss of a bike, but that day of the race, something clicked. That race, I was running one foot in front of the other, step after step. I took the lead and within seconds, it was over ? 10.13 seconds! The spectators were shocked that the underdog had won. I had won. After the game, a man in a suit came to meet me.

?Emmet that was a great race!? he said.

?I don't know what happened! I-I just ran, and I won,?

?Well I've never done this based on one performance, but you seem deserving of it. How would you like to join the Canada's very own Aspiring Athletes Program??

I could not believe my ears. Had I really been selected? The man handed me a form and introduced himself as Coach Parks. However, I knew it was too good to be true and my eyes wandered to the bottom of the page until they spotted the fee ? \$1,500! My mother was single and we were barely affording rent in our crummy, beat-up apartment. At that instant I knew I couldn't join the program, but it was worth asking my mom.

Unsurprisingly, when I returned home that day, my mom simply responded: ?I'm sorry Emmet there's just not enough money.?

I dialed the phone number listed on the form and stated my dilemma.

?Hmm, I see. The government of Canada does offer \$500 to any athlete in need entering this program, but the bottom line is; the shoes, the outfit, the trainers, the track ? they all cost money. I need it within the next week or your admission will have to be terminated.?

?Bu-?

The line went dead.

So maybe with the extra \$500, this program was possible. But I needed another \$1,000, and fast. I took out a pencil and a sheet of paper and began to brainstorm. Bake sale ? too tacky. Car wash ? too many people involved. I had it ? working at the local convenience store!

I rode my bike over to Supermart and asked the owner, Mr. McIntyre if I could work there. He said yes, and since the store was doing particularly well at the time, I would be paid \$100 a day, if I spent all my time and my weekends at the store. I knew that the money only balanced to \$700, but for now it was the best I could do.

The next week of my life became a cycle. Go to school. Eat. Work at the store. Sleep. Repeat. It wasn't easy, but at the end of the week, I had my \$700.

At that moment, the truth reality hit me. The \$1000 fee was due. Tomorrow. And I was still short \$300 dollars.

I plopped down on the couch, defeated.

It's okay, I told myself. There will be other opportunities.

But I knew in my heart that there wouldn't.

I solemnly glided over to my room and idly flipped through a box full of papers. These were all the documents that my father had left behind when he died so many years ago.

This was about the millionth time I had scrolled through the box, but this time I noticed something new. A sheet of paper I had never seen before.

It was a document for a bank account with \$500 dollars in it. A note was scrawled in ink in the margin of the page. ?For Emmet, if he ever needs it.?

Did I ever need it!

My mom drove over to the bank and withdrew the \$300 I needed. I submitted the money the next day and a sigh of relief washed over me.

Little did I know that my journey had only just begun.

August 5, 2011 ? The Training Arena

I walked into the training arena and I couldn't help being proud. Against all odds, I had earned enough money to train in this program. Coach Parks came to meet me and introduce me to the program.

?Ok Emmet, I hope you are ready. There are no shortcuts in the world of sprinting. Meet Darren, my star student. I hope you two become good friends.?

Star student? I thought, I ran 100 metres in 10.13 seconds ? I could beat anyone!

?Hi Emmet I'm Darren.? He stretched out to shake my hand, only to pull away in a fake. He laughed and walked away muttering ?newbie.?

I was furious.

?Let me race him,? I told Coach Parks.

?No, you're not ready. Give me 10 laps. You too Darren ? don't think I didn't see your ?kind' gesture.?

How was this my fault?

I left the arena, wondering what I had done wrong.

For the next month, I didn't run a single race. It was just starting practice, laps and various assortments of workouts.

At last, I was finally going to run a race. Against Darren.

I set myself up in my block.

On your mark.

This would be no challenge.

Set.

I tensed.

The gun went off. Plain and simple, I was beaten by more than half a second. A tough loss, but that day, I learned the importance of humility.

June 1, 2012 ? Before the Olympics

?I want to go to the Olympics.?

?No.?

?I'm ready.?

?No, you're not.?

I was beaten. If Coach wouldn't sign me up for the 2012 Olympics himself, then I couldn't go.

?You will stay here and wait for the next major competition, and you will train harder than ever.?

And train I did.

Days turned to weeks, weeks turned to months, and months turned to years.

Finally, I was ready.

July 10, 2015 ? The Pan Am Games

A huge roar erupted as the group of Canadian athletes entered the stadium for the 2015 Pan Am Games. I had qualified for the Canadian 100-metre sprint team.

I was in the preliminary race and I was against runners from Jamaica, Trinidad and U.S.A. I ran a 9.91 second race and finished second, narrowly missing my record of 9.83. Regardless, it was enough to earn me a place in the semifinal race.

I had never felt better when I was running the semifinal, despite the pressure. I finished first with a time of 9.66 seconds ? my best I ever! I caught a Canada flag that was thrown from the crowd and wore it like cape. It felt great to be in the final. I high-fived Pachi the mascot on my way out of the stadium. I found out later that Darren had also qualified for the final.

The next few days were a flurry of talk show interviews and press conferences. I would be going up against legends such as Tyson Gay and Asafa Powell. As each media event passed, the pressure of the big race mounted. If I wasn't nervous before, I was now.

July 22, 2015 ? The 100 m Final

Today was the day.

To make it, or break it.

Today meant everything.

I looked up at the information screen: Lane 1: CAN ? That was Darren. Lane 2: CAN ? Me. 3: JAM, 4: JAM, 5: TRI, 6: JAM, 7: GBR, 8: USA.

As I stepped into my block, the pressure became unreal. The crowd was cheering and the whole country of Canada, all 36 million, were suddenly on my shoulders.

On you mark.

I took a breath and closed my eyes.

Set.

Everything became slow motion as the gun went off. I had a perfect start and I could feel myself accelerating.

Twenty km/h ? 30 ? 40.

I peered to my left to see I was neck and neck with Darren. My mind raced. Would I win?
But in that moment, it didn't matter. For in that very moment, I had discovered what it meant to fly.

The race of your life

By John Steckley

Adult class

The wind has died down. The snow no longer covers the track. The sky hasn't been gray for at least a day. Here I am, out again, practising for the race of my life. I qualified for the Canadian team in the 1,500 metre run (the so-called metric mile) in the PanAm Games. My running has been going well, but you never know. And running for Canada, what does that mean?

I have been running the streets in the winter, scared that I might slip, but determined to keep on going. Indoor tracks, treadmills are all very well, but it doesn't really feel like running until I am on an outdoor track, or at least outdoors.

Can I picture myself winning? I've seen others on the podium, the national anthem playing, the flag flying, but I've never been able to picture myself there. Or afterwards. I see the others coming off of the podium, to be surrounded by those close to them, those that believed in them, those that supported them, but that doesn't really work for me.

I've always run alone. I don't believe in belonging to a club; that's too social for me. I have no supporters. I'm like those people in the commercial for Goodlife Fitness, to a certain extent, in the part where they say 'I'm not a hero. No one will pretend that they're me?' or words to that effect. But I don't qualify for the second part. I am no child's hero, no son or daughter, nephew or niece. Who cheers for me?

Today's first run starts well, fast and cool. I prefer running in the spring and the fall, but I will be running the race of my life in the summer. I have to remember to watch carefully for ice patches, as this high school track has puddles that might still be frozen. This feels good. This is one of the main reasons why I run. I feel, though, that I might need something else for me to do well, something to push me even harder.

As I circle the track for the second time, picking up my speed a bit, to improve my time, I see an old man walking a dog. I've often seen him on my winter runs. He steps off of the sidewalk with his dog to let me pass. I grunt some form of thanks that I don't know whether he hears. We share early mornings when everyone else is in cars or asleep.

He has stopped walking. His dog is sitting. On my third time around, I notice that they are still there, in the same spot. I feel I have an audience, and that makes me want to run a little faster. In the fourth circuit, I give a final kick that surprises me with its speed. I'm exhausted. I bend over to catch my breath, but I still feel really good.

When I stand straight again, I see the old man and his dog walking towards the track. I find myself walking towards him. 'Good run, son. I think even in my best years, I could not have done the mile that fast.'

'You used to be a miler?' I state and ask at the same time.

'Yep, it was my best distance. But now I can't even run anymore. Achilles tendon, knees and ankles.' As he says these words, he ticks them off with his right index finger onto the index finger of his left hand. We are both silent for a while. Then he says, 'You know I still dream of running, a beautiful dream. It is like flying.' I don't know what to say. There doesn't seem to be any good response.

'I read in the local paper that you are running for Canada in the PanAm Games.'

'Yes,' I reply. 'It is my first international race.'

'You're lucky that your first international run gives you home track advantage,' he replies.

He then stood quietly. I petted his dog. 'Of course, that can be a disadvantage too. You can feel that if you don't win or medal that you have 'let your country down',' he said, complete with finger quotations marks. 'You know that that is a dumb idea brought on by too much hype, too much focus on medals. You would not have let us down. You are running for us in another way. People like me are running with you, even though we can't run, certainly not at your rate. You let us live your thrill, your challenge. You are entering the race of your life and we are with you.'

I don't know how to respond to that, so I don't. He walks away with his dog, and waves with his non-leash hand back to me. I think I have to do something now that will enable me to run faster, something that I can draw on when the body starts to say, 'No more.'

'Old man,' I say to the spring morning. 'I feel I will be running the race of your life too. And it will be a good race.'