

Young Orangeville resident leading the charge for annual Autism Speaks Canada Walk

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The autism community in Dufferin County will be coming together once again to take part in the annual Autism Speaks Canada Walk.

Leading the helm of this year's event will be the 2023 walk ambassador, 11-year-old Orangeville resident Tyler Clinch.

"I feel very honoured and excited to take on this role," said Tyler. "We have been participating [in the walk] since it started in Orangeville and I thought it was my turn to share my story."

Tyler was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder a couple months shy of his second birthday after showing signs of being non-verbal and having limited social cues. After receiving his diagnosis, Tyler began speech therapy and participated in a daily program called the Early Start Denver Model until age 3.

Attending school has played a significant role in Tyler's life, allowing him to thrive both academically and socially with his classmates. Two passions of Tyler's include math and coding.

"Autism means that my brain has some special abilities that are different from everyone else. My biggest strength is math and how my brain works fast to answer the questions. I am smart and love being in school with my friends," said Tyler.

Tyler and his family have taken part in the annual Autism Speaks Canada Walk in Orangeville since its inception.

"We are super proud of him to be engaging with the community this way. Tyler is very proud of his autistic abilities and strength, so it's a huge step for him being able to acknowledge his autism and expressing it into the community," said Tyler's mom, Krista Clinch.

Taking on the role of ambassador for the 2023 Autism Speaks Canada Walk in Orangeville, Tyler hopes he can be an inspiration for other local youth to be proud of their autistic abilities.

"Having autism does not make you less valuable as a person," he said.

Founded in 2006, Autism Speaks Canada (ASC) is a non-for-profit organization focused on promoting the acceptance of people with autism and being a catalyst for autism research breakthroughs. ASC also works towards increasing childhood screening, timely interventions, and improving the transition to adulthood for people with autism.

This year, the fundraising goal in Orangeville for the walk is \$17,000, and at the time of print, the event has raised just over \$8,500. Team Ty, represented by Tyler Clinch, is one of the top teams for donations, having raised over \$2,700 thus far.

Those interested in donating or registering to participate in the Orangeville Autism Speaks Canada Walk can do so by visiting <https://autismspeakscanada.akaraisin.com/ui/walk2023>.

The 2023 Autism Speaks Walk in Orangeville will be held on Sunday, September 24, and will start at 11 a.m. at Fendley Park.