

Co-op placement at Five Counties opens student's eyes to the power of therapy

Claire Bailey now sees children's blocks in a whole new way.

Before her brother Max used them as tools in occupational therapy, there were just toys to her. The revelation about the power of play to teach kids new skills has inspired her to pursue a career where she will show future generations what they can accomplish. Max, now 4, was born with a chromosome microdeletion, which made it difficult for him to swallow, walk and talk. His family was told to prepare for a life where he would not be able to care for himself. However, they banded together to coach him through the journey to exuberant health. Claire was by his side all along.

She remembers watching an occupational therapist at Sick Kids Hospital teaching him how to swallow as a baby. Weeks later when he began longer term treatment at Five Counties Children's Centre in Lindsay, she came with him then helped him with his exercises at home.

"I thought it was neat how him playing



with a block connected with developing fine motor skills," she recalls. "I never looked at it this way."

Now Claire, almost 17, is planning a career in occupational therapy, after a co-op placement this term at Five Counties.

"I love it," she says emphatically about her time at Five Counties. "I've learned the therapists' different tactics and how they work. Little things make a big difference."

In one session, two children played a game where they had to say certain words before they could send a toy bear down a slide. Unwittingly, they were

focusing on improving their speech and the use of their hands. Best of all, one of them hugged Claire at the end of the session.

"Every day, it's like something new," she says.

She also saw how occupational therapy helped her mother Kelly recover from a stroke in November 2015. She had to re-learn skills in focusing and retaining information, such as following conversations and tying a tie.

"It makes you think about things that some people cannot do that you can do," Claire says.

