

Independence for Alexa and Peace of Mind for her Parents

Meeting Alexa will make your day. Alexa is a fun loving five-year-old who likes to “boss around” and play with her dog, Marino. She also enjoys golfing with her Daddy, Justin, and going for bike rides to the park with her Mama, Ashley. If you're really lucky, you'll get to hear her giggle and you won't stop smiling for the rest of the day.

Alexa works hard to build her abilities at Five Counties so she can enjoy the things in life that many of us take for granted. Before she was even born, Alexa's parents were given her diagnosis of Down Syndrome. She has been receiving support at the Centre for years and Ashley couldn't imagine what it would be like if Five Counties weren't located so close to their home. “We're grateful they're local and we haven't had to leave town to get these services. If

there was no Five Counties, it would be so much harder. You walk through the doors and everything you need is there.” From feeding supports when she was a baby, learning to walk, enhancing her communication skills, and loaning out equipment to help with mobility and balance, Five Counties has played a role in helping Alexa become who she is today.

Alexa's biggest challenge is communication. It's easy to see how proud her parents are of how far she has already come in her five and a half years of life. Working on Alexa's communication skills has taken a lot of effort, but Ashley and Justin know how important it is for Alexa to be able to communicate with her peers. On the playground Alexa starts to make friends with other kids, but because of delayed communication skills, “she can



sometimes be left off to the side and that's really hard to watch. She's happy to play by herself but many times I wonder if she knows. That's one of the hardest things to see.” says Ashley. Justin echoes these feelings when explaining that one of the long-term goals for Alexa is to be able to communicate with clerks at a grocery store. Although it may seem like a simple task, it means independence for Alexa and

peace of mind for her parents.

Being able to teach Alexa everything she needs to know has been tough for Ashley and Justin. “As parents there's some things you think you should just know how to teach your child.” says Ashley. One of Alexa's current goals is to be able to ride a bike. When she couldn't reach the pedals, the Five Counties Physiotherapy team adapted a bicycle so she would be able to work on her goal. Currently, “Her therapist Katie is working with Alexa to figure out what bike stage she's at and teach her the skills she needs to ride one”. In addition to teaching Alexa, Ashley and Justin have also been learning how to help Alexa so they can reach her goal as a family. Building abilities for life is Five Counties' mission, and we are so proud that Alexa is well on her way!

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