



# OTTAWA CITIZEN

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## The joys of water-skiing

Disabled youth get a little help making waves

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Sixteen-year-old Effie Corriveau looked chilly but ecstatic when she stepped out of the Rideau River near Osgoode on Wednesday afternoon after her first water-skiing attempt ever. Family, friends and volunteers stood on the bobbing dock, clapping and shouting praises, while Effie swam to shore with instructor Chris Holden and gave everyone two thumbs way up.

Effie, who has cerebral palsy, was one of five youths with different disabilities who strapped on water-skis that day thanks to the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre (OCTC) and the not-for-profit group SkiAbility Ottawa. Effie was certainly a little nervous beforehand but said she'd likely be coming back for more.

The SkiAbility program uses special adaptive technology - waterskis equipped with small cages to sit in, shoulder harnesses that keep the shoulders square and balanced for people who can't hold the rope with both hands, and more - for people who need a little extra help to glide on top of the water.

Tilly Corriveau, Effie's mother, said her youngest of four girls has been getting support for her cerebral palsy through the OCTC since birth. "I couldn't, I couldn't imagine" Effie's life without the OCTC, she said while Effie practised standing up on her skis out on the water. "She has just got a lot of confidence from the programming here. Anything that Emily (Glossop) puts out with the leisure services, (Effie's) on it. She wants to try it, she wants to go for it."

Glossop works in the recreational therapy department at the OCTC, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year and boasts about 3,500 clients in the Ottawa area. The centre has a number of offices in the city, as well as satellite branches in Renfrew and Cornwall.

Alex Marta, 15, has been waterskiing through the OCTC for the past three years, and likes it because she gets to water-ski with the same people that she skis with in the winter months. "For now, it's just for fun," Alex said shortly before getting into the boat for her turn out on the water with Holden coaching at her side. "Maybe I would compete, but I'm not sure."

Already this year the centre has organized events for alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, ice sledge hockey, wheelchair tennis and more, all with the goal of engaging youths into the sport and community independently, Glossop said.

Celina Salamani, 15, is one such young person. She is recovering from a virus that attacked her spine and affected the nerves in her legs in 2007, which forced her to stop figure skating and the other sports she once competed in.

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, organizers of the Rick Hansen Relay asked for nominations for people and organizations that have made a difference in their communities. The OCTC was nominated and accepted, and was asked to nominate two clients or parents to represent the organization during the relay.

On Wednesday, Celina - who volunteers for SkiAbility and now trains competitively in water-skiing after being introduced to it years ago through the OCTC - found out that she'll be a medal bearer when the relay comes through Ottawa in October.

"I was a dancer, I was a figure skater, a very competitive figure skater and a soccer player," Celina said. "I've always been a competitive person. So after seven years of competitive figure skating . it (the virus) struck me very much. And when I got into water-skiing a year later, I wanted to be competitive. I like the challenge, I think.

"It's a sport I hope to be able to continue with for a very long time."

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