



MERCEDES-BENZ PRESENTS  
**MACKIDS WALK  
AND WHEEL FOR  
MIRACLES 2015**

By: Erica Nelson

This year, Mercedes-Benz Burlington and Quantum Automotive Group, under the leadership of President and CEO Ken Szekely, will be co-hosting the McMaster Children's Hospital MacKids Walk and Wheel for Miracles fundraising event.

This will be the fourth year that this event will run, and the team at Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation is honoured to announce their new partnership with Mercedes-Benz Burlington.

"When Mercedes-Benz Burlington approached us about becoming a partner in Walk and Wheel we could not have been more thrilled. The brand is so iconic and so attached to the idea of excellence and that is what we strive for, providing excellent healthcare," explains Jennifer Laughton, the Vice President of Development for McMaster Children's Hospital Foundation.

MacKids Walk and Wheel is a truly unique fundraising event for several reasons. One of the biggest is that it is designed for complete participation from the Children's Hospital patients. The children being treated at McMaster Children's Hospital are battling a number of serious healthcare problems that prevent them from taking part in many of life's adventures. The Walk and Wheel fundraiser was created to not only support these children, but to give them a chance to celebrate their own strength and resilience against the diseases they are suffering from.

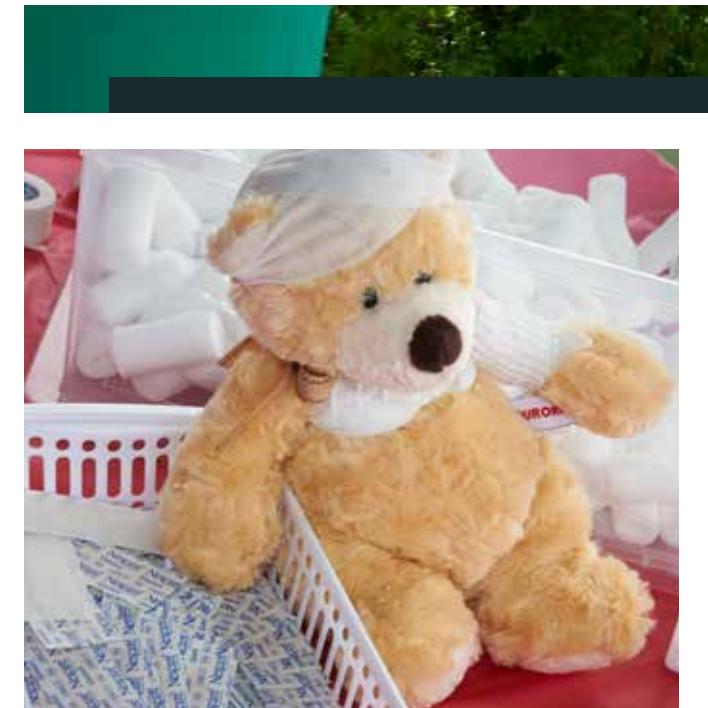
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# MiracleFest is McMaster Children's Hospital's way of saying thank you to its donors and supporters, but also a way to celebrate the work they've achieved with the children.

"A lot of the kids are survivors or currently in the fight for their life so the Walk and Wheel was designed with that in mind. The event is kept short, only 10 a.m to 2 p.m because the children do get tired," Laughton explains.

The event consists of two bike rides and a five-kilometre walk. The bike rides are broken up by age group. The first is called the Lil Tikes on Trikes bike ride for children ages 2-5 and the second is Wonders on Wheels for kids ages 6-10. The walk is called the Trailblazers 5 km Walk and is open to all ages. None of these activities are too strenuous for children who may be weak, still going through treatment, just came out of a surgery or are relying on medical equipment to get around.

Following the walk and the bike rides, the hospital hosts what is called MiracleFest. MiracleFest is McMaster Children's Hospital's way of saying thank you to its donors and supporters, but also a way to celebrate the work they've achieved with the children. The day includes breakfast and lunch sponsored by Tim Horton's, Pizza Pizza and Maple Lodge Farms. It is also filled with activities.



"We have activities set up for every age. We set up bouncy castles, X-Box stations, photo booths, hot air balloon rides and colouring stations," Laughton elaborates.

One of the most favoured activities is what McMaster calls the Teddy Bear Hospital. This feature was added two years ago and has proven both fun and therapeutic for the children at MacKids Walk and Wheel for Miracles. The activity involves 300-400 teddy bears being donated for the children to choose from. The kids get to name their stuffed animal friends and are given a certificate of ownership for them as well. They then bring their new bears to the hospital which is manned by the McMaster child life specialists. They have the opportunity to take their bear for exercises, bandage them up, get them an x-ray, etc. This turns the children into the doctors, and they get to help and support their bears through the same sorts of medical treatments that they go through on a daily basis. It becomes a very cathartic exercise for the children to express how they felt through their own hospital experiences.

All of these activities and festival events are free to those participating in the Walk and Wheel fundraiser. Participants can raise \$50 to support the cause or pay \$25 to register and then they are given complete access to all of the amenities the day has to offer. On the day of the event, if anyone from the community wishes to take part, they can pay \$10 for a wristband for access to all the activities.

"It was very important to me that the event be accessible to anyone in the community," says Laughton.



This year, the event will take place at Pier 4 Park in Hamilton on Saturday May 30th. Last year, the Walk and Wheel raised over \$160,000 to help the hospital and saw over 800 people come out to support the cause. This year, they hope to raise \$175,000 and see as many as 1000 participants. People come from all over the region to help support this cause. Residents of Hamilton, Burlington, St. Catharines, Mississauga and many more come out to support this cause.

The funds that are produced through Mercedes-Benz Burlington and the MacKids Walk and Wheel for Miracles event are undesignated which means they can be put towards whatever the most urgent need is for the hospital. With the growth of the event, the scale of what it impacts grows as well. One of the most pertinent needs is medical equipment. Equipment is one of the few features of a hospital that receives zero government funding. Every piece of equipment in a hospital is purchased from donated funds.

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"It is rare that you can draw a direct line between what you do and saving a life. Sometimes we will purchase a piece of equipment and that same piece of equipment, that same day will save a child's life. The people that donated the funds to make that possible can stand there and say that they saved a child's life, and that's incredibly profound," Laughton explains.

The announcement of Mercedes-Benz Burlington as the new co-host and presenting sponsor for this year's event could not have come at a more opportune time. The synergies between the two corporations align perfectly for the goal of MacKids Walk and Wheel and the community connections reinforce the brilliance behind the relationship. A large number of children from Burlington receive specialized care at McMaster Children's Hospital.

Another driving force behind the MacKids Walk and Wheel for Miracles event is to promote the idea of bicycle safety in children. The hospital partners with the Hamilton Police Service and the city's Public Health Services itself to promote safe practices when bike riding with children. Before anyone begins their ride, they are shown a demonstration on the proper way to wear a helmet. This year, with Mercedes-Benz Burlington co-hosting, the event will introduce an element on car safety. In Canada, roughly eight out of ten kids are placed in their car seats incorrectly. The event will demonstrate the correct way to utilize both a car seat and a seatbelt for older children. Mercedes-Benz Burlington will be providing several cars to use during these demonstrations.

Mercedes-Benz Burlington is not just an average partner for the MacKids Walk and Wheel For Miracles event. Their partnership goes above and beyond the role of other financial sponsors. Not only will they be supporting the cause on a financial level, but

they are "really integrating themselves into our marketing to help us disseminate information about the event," Laughton explains. Beyond the marketing aspect, Mercedes-Benz Burlington is donating its time to the event through a long list of volunteers that will be there on May 30th.

"What has always touched me about our relationship with Mercedes-Benz Burlington is their integrity. They only want to do what is best for the hospital on every level. At no point have we had a conversation about what would be best for Mercedes-Benz Burlington; it has been all about how they can help us. I have worked with many sponsors in the past few years, and Mercedes-Benz Burlington is outstanding."

For more information, or to get involved in MacKids Walk and Wheel for Miracles, please visit:  
[www.mackids.ca/walkandwheel](http://www.mackids.ca/walkandwheel)

For more information on Mercedes-Benz Burlington please visit:  
[www.burlington.mercedes-benz.ca](http://www.burlington.mercedes-benz.ca)

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