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BACK SEND TO A FRIEND FEEDBACK

QUESTION OF THE WEEK
 Do you feel positive about the development of Abbotsford's three Plan A projects?
 Yes No
Submit
VIEW RESULTS

A brave new world for Ella

By



Little Ella van Enter in the TheraSuit which physiotherapist Heather Branscombe (left) and mom Andrea (right) hope will teach the three-year-old Abbotsford girl, who has cerebral palsy, how to walk.

SHEENA JACKSON
 Abbotsford News

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Three-year-old Ella van Enter took three steps all by herself on Tuesday.

It was a huge step forward for the little Abbotsford girl who just three weeks ago struggled to stand by herself for a few seconds.

Ella has cerebral palsy and until recently was used to getting around with the aid of a walker or by crawling.

"When she walked, she was screaming 'yes' and wanting to do it again," said Ella's mother Andrea, recalling the emotional moment.

Van Enter explained her daughter's progress is thanks to the TheraSuit, an invention inspired by technology developed to help Russian astronauts,

using multiple elastic bands attached to various body points to keep their bodies in place while they rebuild weak or wasted muscles.

"We were excited because we knew Ella would be perfect. She has the perfect personality," said van Enter.

Abbotsford physiotherapist Heather Branscombe said it is the first time the TheraSuit has been used in Canada and Ella is her first client. She bought the suit for US \$2,500.

Ella had three weeks of intensive therapy with Branscombe, three hours a day, five days a week.

Her family sold the family van, which co-incidentally was going to be sold around that time anyway, to help pay for the \$4,500 treatment.

"It offers more options and different options for children and adults with neurological disabilities to get them to next level of ability," said Branscombe, who works at Abbotsford Physiotherapy.

"It's a way to help them experience more natural patterns of movement rather than having the hands of the physiotherapist on them all the time. They're more independent."

Branscombe received her certification in the U.S. and hopes the use of the TheraSuit will catch on in Canada.

"I view it as a piece of exercise equipment, like a treadmill," explained Branscombe.

"It's a means to an end to help get them (the clients) to their next level of ability," she said.

Both Branscombe and Ella's mother Andrea believe the little girl will walk.

"With Ella I saw the independence," said Branscombe, who said she's not surprised by her progress.

"She could stand for a brief second before (the therapy), but after the therapy, now she understands standing up is much cooler than crawling. She's willing to practice more and it's opened up her world."

Van Enter admits the therapy wasn't easy and a

few tears were shed, but she is proud of her only child and what she has achieved.

"You don't want physiotherapy to be your kid's life, but in Ella's case we just wanted that three weeks to push her to her full potential before she went to pre-school," she said.

"Yes, 100 per cent I believe she will be able to walk."

And according to her mother, Ella is fully aware of her progress.

"Ella knows exactly what's going on," said van Enter.

"There's something in her eyes and she'll stand by herself and she knows she's doing something she hasn't done for a while."

The van Enter's hope to use the TheraSuit again, maybe in six months to a year's time.

"It's just a relief to know there's something out there," added van Enter.



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