

Who was Sacha Chenier?

Sacha was born in 2002. He suffered from cerebral palsy, blindness, epilepsy and cognitive delays. Despite these challenges, the young boy lived life to the fullest with the loving support of parents Jason and Jacquelyn and older brother Sebastien. He was also a beloved and a well-known student at his school, *École élémentaire catholique Paul VI* in Hawkesbury.

In 2010, the Eastern Ontario chapter of the Make-a-Wish Foundation granted the Chenier family a trip to Walt Disney World in Florida. The whole family enjoyed this once-in-a-lifetime trip. It was during this trip that the idea for “Sacha’s Park” began.

Father Jason Chenier recalled that older brother Sebastien stated that one of the best times he had while on the trip was the opportunity to push his little brother in a special adapted swing at an accessible playground located at the resort they were staying at. The “Give Kids the World” resort had a fully accessible playground, unlike anything the family had seen before. Sacha’s delight was obvious as he and his brother played on the equipment, and especially so when Sebastien pushed him on the swing. Sadly, it was the only time Sacha got to enjoy playing at a park with his brother.

After his passing, the Chenier family turned their grief into positive action. A Facebook event page simply called “Smiles for Sacha day” was created which attracted thousands of visitors. On December 19, 2014, which would have been Sacha’s birthday, friends, family, and even strangers honoured his memory on the first birthday after his passing by sharing “Smiles for Sacha”. The Facebook page encouraged readers to do something kind for people in order to make them smile. Over 1,000 participants took up this challenge.

The family’s desire to turn their grief into positive action continued with the creation of a park similar to the one they had visited with Sacha, a few years prior.

As “Sacha’s Park” gets closer to becoming a reality, Sacha Chenier’s memory will live on, to the delight of those who were touched by him, but also for all generations to partake in simple fun... that of playing together. *“Sacha’s Park... Where EVERYONE can play”*.

Suggested reading:

“Sacha’s Park: Where EVERYONE Can Play” (PDF document explaining the playground project) http://www.champlain.ca/documents/sasha_park_doc.pdf