

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Zumba Mega Party Raises Over \$13,000 for Sacha's Park.**

August 30th, 2015

Vankleek Hill, ON -

A Zumba mega-party, hosted this past Saturday by Vankleek Hill resident Louise Stephenson, saw nearly a hundred participants dancing in the rain to raise over thirteen thousand dollars to help build Sacha's Park.

The participants, who wore the capes and costumes of their favourite super heroes, weren't deterred by the light rain that came down throughout the event, which was held on the outdoor rink at the Vankleek Hill arena. Many commented that the opportunity to dance in the rain added to the overall fun ambiance of the evening. The event, dubbed the "We Got The Power - Zumba Fundraiser for Sacha's Park", featured Zumba instructors from as far away as Ottawa and Montreal, who were on hand to assist Louise Stephenson in leading the crowd through two hours of Latin- and international rhythm- inspired dance numbers. The instructors were joined at various points throughout the event by sponsored dancers, including members of the Hawkesbury OPP detachment. In addition to the dancing, activities also included face painting, a photo booth, door prizes and a silent auction.

The funds raised will go towards the purchase of equipment for Sacha's Park, a universally accessible playground project to be built in L'Orignal in memory of Sacha Chenier. The project, being spearheaded by Sacha's family, who have donated land for the project, has received enthusiastic support from members of the Champlain Township council. The proposal has also seen broad community support since it was announced this past March. The park, once built, will be one of the most inclusive playgrounds in Canada and feature items that will allow children of all abilities to play together.

The Chenier family were on hand for the event and were overjoyed by the continued community support. Jason Chenier, Sacha's father, expressed the family's gratitude: "*We are so touched by this wonderful event that Lou put together. It's amazing to see so many people come out in support of what we are trying to do. The community as a whole is really getting behind this project, and it is heartwarming to see*".

Jacquelyn Chenier, Sacha's mother, adds *“it was such a great night, and to see everyone out in their superhero costumes dancing and having fun in memory of our little Sacha really touches our hearts. Sacha would be so happy to know that all these people are working so hard to make this playground a reality”*.

The evening's event concluded with an emotional final dance number to Sacha's favourite song, “Over The Rainbow” by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. Before leaving, the participants came together for a big group hug, as a balloon, released memory of Sacha, gently floated into the night sky.

Louise Stephenson was gratified at the success of the event *“None of our participants will ever forget this evening. The love and energy in the air were palpable. A whole community pulled together and danced in the rain to make a dream come true. I have tears in my eyes at the thought that we raised over \$13,000 with our Zumba fundraiser. I am quite sure that little Sacha was smiling tonight, kicking his feet to the rhythm of this incredible event ”*.

The park's fundraising efforts will continue at the upcoming Beau's Oktoberfest, where the Chenier family will be hosting a kid-friendly food concession as part of the “Kinderfest” family area activities.

Louise Stephenson and her Zu-Lou Tribe groove to Latin and international rhythms five times a week in Vankleek, with both a low-impact and regular version. Join the party on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. For more information, visit [louises.zumba.com](http://louises.zumba.com).

More information about Sacha's Park can be found online at:  
[gofundme.com/EveryoneCanPlay](http://gofundme.com/EveryoneCanPlay)

### **About Sacha's Park:**

A playground, to be known as Sacha's Park, is being proposed for the new Place La Seigneurie development in L'Original. The playground, once built, will be different than a typical playground in that it will be universally accessible allowing children of all abilities to fully enjoy the park and its equipment. The goal for Sacha's Park is to create a playground that is inclusive and where the equipment works for everyone, including children with disabilities. A playground where EVERYONE can play. The Chenier family have purchased property for the park to be built on and are working with the Township of Champlain, who are supportive of the project, to secure funding for the equipment, which will cost several hundred thousand dollars.

### **Attached Photos:**

1. Louise Stephenson leading group dance (photo credit Gabriel Landriault)
2. The Chenier family accepting a cheque from Louise Stephenson (photo credit: Bruce Toombs).

**About Sacha Chenier:**

Sacha Chenier was an 11 year old boy who lived in L'Original, Ontario. He was severely affected by cerebral palsy and required the use of a wheelchair for most of his life. He was also born blind, epileptic, and with severe cognitive delays. Sacha required assistance for his daily care, as he was unable to do the most basic of tasks without help. He was lovingly cared for at home where he lived with his parents Jason and Jacquelyn and his older brother Sebastien. Despite his many challenges, Sacha was a happy little boy who loved to be around other children. He attended school in Hawkesbury at École Paul VI where he was loved by his many friends. Sacha always had a smile on his face and his infectious laughter could brighten up a room. Sacha passed away suddenly on June 9th 2014 due to epilepsy related complications.

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**More information about Sacha's Park:**

[GoFundMe.com/EveryoneCanPlay](https://www.gofundme.com/EveryoneCanPlay)

[Facebook.com/SachasPark](https://www.facebook.com/SachasPark)

Tumblr:[sachaspark.tumblr.com](https://sachaspark.tumblr.com)

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