

The Preusse Family

“Ramped Up and Decked Out”



Playing on his family’s rotten, splintery deck was nightmare for Matteus.

Matteus has spina bifida. His lower legs are paralyzed, and in those areas, he can’t feel his skin. That didn’t stop the enthusiastic little guy from wanting to play outside, like his older sister.



“He was two years old then, and he just loved being out on the deck. But his walker would get stuck because it was uneven. And when he crawled on it, because he can’t feel his knees and his feet, he’d get all these splinters and cuts. Then, because of his nerve damage, those cuts take forever to heal. But because he couldn’t feel how he had hurt himself, telling him not to go out there didn’t make any sense to him,” his mother Celia Preusse explains.

So the family had to be on perpetual alert—which didn’t always work either. “Sometimes his sister would forget and leave the door open and out he’d go ... and then I’d end up having to gouge out all these horrible splinters,” says Celia.

The stairs to the house, which is located in Sechelt, British Columbia, were even more of a worry. “When Matteus first learned to walk he was using a walker with four wheels. If he ever got out that door, it could have been so dangerous for him. And we had to carry him up and down It was awful, having so much frustration and inaccessibility right in our own home,” Celia continues.

The grant from Giving in Action’s Children and Youth with Special Needs Fund enabled the Preusse family to replace the stairs with a ramp, and connect it with an upgraded deck, which they refinished with a smooth surface. The renovation made an enormous difference in the family’s life.



“Matteus just loves it out there, and there’s no issue with him being out there. Wanting to get outside was a huge motivator for him in learning how to walk, and it was so great that we could just let him go. There are all these normal things we can do now which we just couldn’t do, before. Now we can leave the door open on a sunny day, and he can play outside with his sister ... We can eat our meals out there. It seems like such a simple thing, but it has made such a difference. And we could

never have afforded it on our own,” says Celia.

“Life would be so incredibly frustrating, for him and for us, if we hadn’t got the help from Giving in Action. The great thing is, because he so young, he’s not going to know a time

when his home was less accessible for him. He's just going to take all this accessibility for granted. And really, that's how it should be," his happy mother concludes.