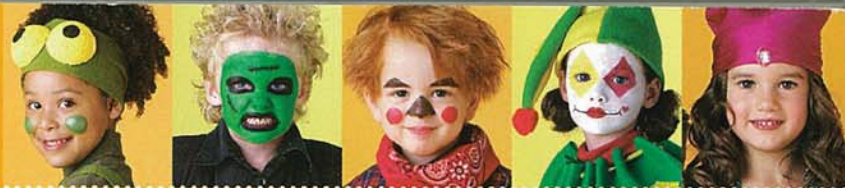


HALLOWEEN

Costumes made easy p.117



# Today's CANADIAN Parent

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Solve  
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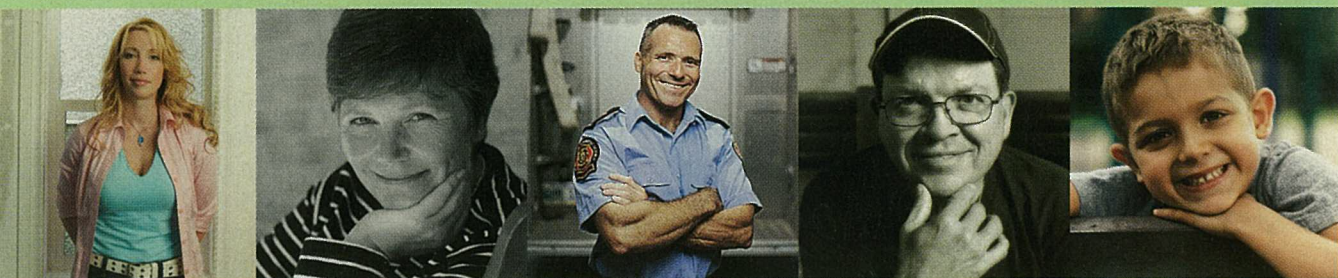
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# our heroes

We're honoured to introduce the five winners of the second annual **Today's Parent For Kids' Sake Awards**. On the next few pages, you'll meet an advocate who is changing the way we see disabilities; a daycare provider who puts the care in caregiving; a firefighter who's made saving lives into child's play; a mentor who is quietly turning lives around, one child at a time, and a boy who turned his own battle with cancer into a gift for other kids.



PROFILES BY DAN BORTOLOTTI



Winners of the **Today's Parent For Kids' Sake Awards** each receive a donation of \$3,000 to be directed to the registered charity of their choice. To nominate *your* hero for next year's awards, turn to p. 169.



# advocate

KATHLEEN SHIELS



IT BEGAN WITH SOMETHING EVERY PARENT HAS DONE A dozen times: buying a drink at the food court of a local mall. Moments later, Kathleen Shiels' world changed forever when her son, Coltyn, five days shy of his second birthday, was struck by a large metal cart and suffered permanent brain damage.

"My son went from being a walking, talking two-year-old to the level of an infant," Shiels says. Overwhelmed by lights, sounds and touch, and prone to punishing headaches, Coltyn would sometimes have screaming episodes that lasted for days. "I knew I had to dry my tears and pray for the courage to get through a very rough road."

Before her son's injury in 2001, Shiels had been a preschool teacher and basketball coach in Vancouver. Now she's turned her talents to fighting for her own family and others like it as a full-time activist for people with disabilities.

Shiels admits the lioness in her comes out when she's lobbying the government or speaking to the media about the everyday obstacles faced by families living with disabilities. But at its heart, her work is about celebrating abilities. "In my house, *can't* is the ultimate swear word," she says with a laugh. She's helped put together a CD of music written, performed and produced by people with brain injuries. She's launching a website ([aftermathconnection.ca](http://aftermathconnection.ca)) with disability resources and advocacy tips. Last year, she gathered a team of able-bodied and disabled rowers to represent Canada at an international race in Hawaii.

"Once you're in that boat, it's true equality because you can't tell who's in a chair and who's not."

Shiels says her activities — and there are so many that she sleeps just two to four hours a night — are a way of sharing her expertise. But they're also an attempt to take back control after Coltyn's injury transformed her life. "After what happened to my son, I thought I had lost everything. What I ended up gaining was the true meaning of unconditional love."

"Thanks to Kathleen, many children and families will get the help they might not otherwise have found."

PAUL TUBBE, NOMINATOR

KATHLEEN SHIELS' CHOSEN CHARITY • WESTERN SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN • [wsforchildren.com](http://wsforchildren.com)

ROBERT KARPA