Jorge, age 3 1/2 and visually impaired, wears his new pediatric belt cane and walks independently.

April came in like lamb and then roared out the happiest of all jubilant roars imaginable. Our cover photos are of Jorge and his occupational therapist, Ronit from St. Mary’s in Nassau.

The first photo is Jorge’s first time wearing a pediatric belt cane, the second photo shows his first time wearing his belt cane taking a walk outside holding Ronit’s hand. The third photo is him walking independently inside his home.

Ronit wanted to help. She googled ‘Pediatric white cane’ and found Safe Toddlers. We made Jorge a pediatric belt cane and delivered it, in person!

We have been following Jorge’s progress ever since. After 10 days, Ronit texted a video of Jorge walking independently with the message: “Look who is so proud of himself!”

I wrote back

“Such GREAT progress!! You ARE the best!!

Ronit replied

“Thank you but it was Safe Toddlers’ device that gave him confidence. He did even better today. His mom cried when she saw him walking. I’ll send more video tomorrow.”
Jorge's progress is the most important part of the story - but the SECOND most important part of the story is that CBS-NY covered his story!

Safe Toddlers was featured on Friday, April 23, 2021! The screen shot featured here links to the online video. You see his father, Jorge, walking with his son.

They did a terrific job. They aired a noon segment and again at 6PM with Dana Tyler introducing the story. The story set the correct tone – and despite the large, unfamiliar crowd of people gathered around him, Jorge did so well.

A graduate of the Hunter College Combined Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Teaching and Orientation and Mobility is his O&M instructor, Tara Olson, she is featured in the story along with VISIONS Services for the Blind, where she works. It was a true New York City good news story!
More Good News!

Last month’s featured wearer, soon to be three-year-old Miss Belle of Texas Kenedi, became a VIRAL sensation! First on Tik Tok and then on Twitter.

One video showing Kenedi running while wearing her pediatric belt cane currently listed on Tiktok with 10.4 million views!

The video starts with her running away from the camera, she’s fast.

Then the caption reads “So many have asked about when she runs into things so here it is(heart emoji)”. Then we see Kenedi’s cane stop her – it found a stationary counter.

Kenedi recoils like a pro and stands up straight, lifts her cane, walks towards it and begins to use the cane frame to investigate further. As you may remember, Kenedi is blind.

Guiding Kenedi TikTok page shows 10.4M views. This page links to her page.
The TikTok, Twitter and CBS-NY news story led to an outpouring of support.

Donations came, overwhelmingly positive comments about the benefits of the pediatric belt cane spread across the land and people who have toddlers and preschool learners who are blind are finding us too! In Puerto Rico, India, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

Our message is a simple we’re here to help.

**Our Mission is to find a solution for blind toddlers walking safely – the pediatric belt cane for clear path detection.**

...and WAIT there’s More Good News!

**Safe Toddlers and Soterix Medical Awarded!**

**Phase 1 Small Business Innovation Research**

The Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences selected our proposal among the highest submitted to fund! We will receive $200,000 over 8 months to begin creation of the **EIO&M app with PBC and smart belt (SB) sensor technology.**

The project began May 1, 2021!

We will be developing an app system that connects with the cane to improve communication and evaluation efforts between professionals and parents.
Board Member Introduction

Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller, PhD, historian and former Vice Chancellor at the University of New Orleans, is a founding board member of Safe Toddlers and brings all his expertise to our nonprofit. He is helping us to grow and meet the challenges using the same expertise he applied to building the National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

Nick was President and CEO of the National WWII Museum, a project he began with renowned historian and celebrated author Stephen E. Ambrose. Neither Ambrose nor Mueller had the faintest notion that their idea crafted first in 1960 over glasses of sherry in the Ambrose family backyard would one day mushroom into a mega-museum on six acres in downtown New Orleans. The National WWII Museum is ranked by TripAdvisor users as No. 3 among American museums and No. 8 among museums worldwide. It is a must see!

Mueller's exceptional contributions to the preservation and interpretation of WWII history and his special contributions to public awareness of the D-Day landings in Normandy have resulted in numerous awards, including the French government's Legion of Honor, which he was bestowed with and two national figures who have assisted the Museum since its founding, Tom Hanks and Tom Brokaw. Mueller has also been elected to the board of the National History Center in Washington, DC, the public advocacy subsidiary of the American Historical Association.

We are very lucky to have Nick Mueller on our Board!
On-going Project Seeking Additional Participants

AWARDED!
Investigation of the Use of Pediatric Belt Canes with Young Children with CHARGE Syndrome Not Meeting Gross Motor Milestones

Safe Toddlers has five CHARGE Families signed up. We can admit 5 more families to this project. Please contact info@safetoddlers.org if you would like more information go to www.safetoddlers.org/research

Project Team

Dr. Grace Ambrose-Zaken, COMS, President and CEO Safe Toddlers
Dr. Marom Bikson, Shames Professor of Biomedical Engineering, The City College of New York of the City University of New York (CUNY), New York, NY.
Dr. Lauren Lieberman, Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Physical Education & Sport Studies, School of Health, Education & Human Services, State University of New York, College at Brockport
Dr. Melanie Porreault, Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Physical Education & Sport Studies, State University of New York at Brockport
Dr. Pamela Beach, Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Physical Education & Sport Studies, School of Health, Education & Human Services, State University of New York, College at Brockport
Mohamad FallahRad, Biomedical Engineer, The City College of New York of the City University of New York (CUNY), New York, N.Y.

The purpose

This study will help determine whether the feedback from wearing the PBC helps children with CHARGE Syndrome to walk independently.
This project will provide pediatric belt canes to ten families whose children ages 12 to 84 months with CHARGE Syndrome are demonstrating difficulty achieving independent walking. Families will receive free belt canes and be compensated for providing feedback to the project.

To learn more please contact Safe Toddlers info@safetoddlers.org or call us at 914-204-9292
Safe Mobility Moment

Dear Grace:

My child is three-years-old is blind and no longer walking. The physical therapist feels we should get him to use a posterior walker before we try the pediatric belt cane. What are your thoughts?

Sincerely,

A Family

Dear A Family:

A three-year-old who is blind and can bear weight, meaning independent walking is a goal, needs both. We agree that every device that will help him walk is important. Since physical therapists focus on the mechanics of the motor skill and orientation and mobility specialists focus on safe mobility tools, together we can collaborate for the best outcome for your son.

Below is a photo of Damien. His mom Ashley Zellner, recently participated in our podcast/vodcast series. She attempted to provide her son Damien with the pediatric belt cane without his rear-facing walker. We recommended they use both, at first. It wasn’t long afterwards, that Damien no longer needed his walker. He now walks independently.

Independent walking is a visual motor skill – the motor is balance, foot placement, leg and arm coordination (swing). The visual information is what is in the path - vision tells the walker whether the path clear or blocked. Pediatric belt canes provide effective sensory information that takes the place of vision. It stops the child who is blind at a stationary object. It allows the child who is blind to know that the path is clear, flat and with that information - he can go.

Increasing a child’s independent walking time eventually builds the muscle and balance skills needed to let go of the walker.

Have a Safe Mobility Day!

Grace

[Images of Damien using different mobility tools]
Three Rules for Pediatric Belt Cane Success

1. Make putting on belt cane part of the daily routine - get dressed, put on cane, go brush teeth, etc.
2. When wearing the belt cane help the child free herself and right the cane (less and less overtime).
3. Wear it most of the day, every day. When the lights are on the belt cane is on.

Podcast/Vodcast

May will be interviews with more users- please let us know if you would be willing to share your pediatric belt cane story with us - info@safetoddles.org
To listen: https://www.safetoddles.org/podcast and watch https://www.safetoddles.org/family-professionals

If you know someone who has a child younger than five who is not able to visually avoid obstacles, please tell them to go to: www.safetoddles.org/application

If you are able to donate a cane, part of a cane, or help us build our network of donors, please go to www.safetoddles.org/donate

Happy Spring!