

Safe Mobility Times

February 2021 Volume 1 Issue 2



AWARDED!

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

We ARE so pleased to announce that Safe Toddles was awarded a research grant by The CHARGE SYNDROME FOUNDATION!

Project Team

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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@safetoddles.org or call us at 914-204-9292

New Board Member Welcome!

Roxann Mayros joined Safe Toddlers' Board of Directors



Roxann Mayros is here to help! Many of you know her as she has held leadership roles in the field of blindness and low vision for over 30 years. Her experience is as a leader and innovator. Roxann rescued the Florida Lighthouse for the Blind from ruin and under her guidance grew it into a multi-million dollar benefit to the community. She helped to build the nonprofit VisionServe Alliance, a national organization for nonprofits that provide services to people of all ages - from babies to the elderly, in to what it is today.

She has written legislation, advocated at the Federal and state levels of government, grown new nonprofits into successful organizations, turned distressed nonprofits into impressive nonprofits and she has led large and seasoned nonprofits to greater glories.

Roxann has served on national and local boards, and along the way she earned a Master's Degree in Nonprofit Management and became a certified board consultant. We are so grateful to include Roxann Mayros on our team!!

Safe Mobility Moment

Some new belt cane users have expressed concern that their experiences introducing the belt cane didn't go so smoothly. We ask them to not give up on the goal of their child who is blind wearing the belt cane most of the day, every day. With a little patience and understanding, they can help their child through the transition, it is sometimes darkest before the dawn.

Dictionary

Terrible twos a period in a child's early social development (typically around the age of two years) that is associated with defiant or unruly behavior.

Dear Grace:

My child is two-year-old and when I tried to put the belt cane on, she rejected it. She doesn't like to wear the belt cane, what should I do?

*Sincerely,
A Family*

Dear A Family:

We believe you and we are here to help! Yes, little toddlers and preschoolers who are blind and mobility visually impaired will have opinions. The reason one child appears to reject wearing the belt cane may not always be the same as another child's reason.

Adults can help their children learn to accept the belt cane, once the adult is convinced of its benefit. If you prefer your child who is blind to walk without it, pay close attention to the speed of the gait and the outcome. Do you want your child to walk a lot or a little, fast or slow?

If you have a younger child who is sighted and he is walking faster, more frequently and with greater ability than his sister who is blind, understand, that is because she is not wearing her belt cane. She does not have the same safety to build self-confidence. Mom turns the lights on for her sighted brother- he can't turn them on for himself. Mom needs to put the belt cane on his blind sister- she can't put her cane on for herself.

There is no reason a blind toddler or preschooler should not be able to walk as fast or as well as her younger brother.

The sooner you begin providing the belt cane the better. Just remember Rome was not built in a day. You know your child best, you will find a way to achieve your goal, once you're sure.

Keep smiling,
Grace



Maddox was two when he began using his belt cane

When 2-year-old's resist wearing the belt canes

When a two-year-old child who is blind or mobility visually impaired is exerting important social behavior of defiance it has an unruly look and feel to it, and it may just be age-appropriate. In fact, this term *Terrible Twos* is found in most dictionaries.

Terrible two behaviors are a good sign- because it shows the child has strength of character. Of course, the problem is at 2- years - a child doesn't know right from wrong. A saying I grew up learning was "cutting one's nose off to spite one's face"- Not wearing the belt cane keeps your two-year-old at risk whenever he moves about, he doesn't know that, only an adult can teach him the benefit.

First, be happy and celebrate the child who is exerting her strong will, but do not make her pay the consequence for her lack of understanding. She is two. She does not know any better.

Your two-year-old girl doesn't know to ask for the belt cane, she can only benefit from it when the adult provides her with this safety device (like a car seat). It is the rare child who never protested being strapped into a car seat, but as adults we must insist for the child's safety.

Helpful Hints

Introduction - introduce the belt cane - allow the child to touch it and talk about it before putting it on.

Distraction - don't make it about the belt cane at all- make putting on the belt cane the least interesting thing about the activity- As you put on the belt cane say, "we're going to toy shelf and pick out your favorite toy".

Interaction - make sure the frame of the belt contacts people and things along the way. It is important that a child who cannot see get lots of tactile feedback from the frame.

Contraction - (it rhymes?) make a contract- for example, say "if you keep the belt cane on, we'll go to the trampoline and there we'll take it off and jump for five minutes."

Keep clear in your mind when you can't see to avoid collisions, *there is no benefit to walking without this protective frame.*

Q. It seems more awkward- each time the frame contacts something

A. Yes, this is a WIN - because each time the belt cane frame contacts something is one time less the child's body contacts without warning.

Q. My child pushes, pulls at the handles and belt.

A. Making minor adjustments, figuring out its size, shape and impact- exploring the device is good.

Q. My child just wants to stand still.

A. Physical therapists count standing still as a positive sign.

Q. My child stands and twists scraping the frame on the floor ahead.

A. This is information gathering- clear path, smooth floor.

Q. My child knocks the frame into things to make a noise and bangs it on the ground.

A. This is information gathering, the child gains a better understanding of what's around him by exploring objects with the cane frame and tips. Parent's can control and redirect this behavior when it seems excessive or out of place.

Rule of threes for belt cane success

1. Make putting on belt cane part of the morning 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. Leave it on, leave it on, leave it on

Podcast Update

Tune in Monday March 1, 2021 to hear Geri Darko, COMS kick off our month of talking with O&M specialists about their experiences with the pediatric belt cane.

Geri discusses her experiences with her two students Jack and Wyatt! Geri is a fan, she is the only O&M at her school and the first to bring belt canes to Montana.



Join us in March

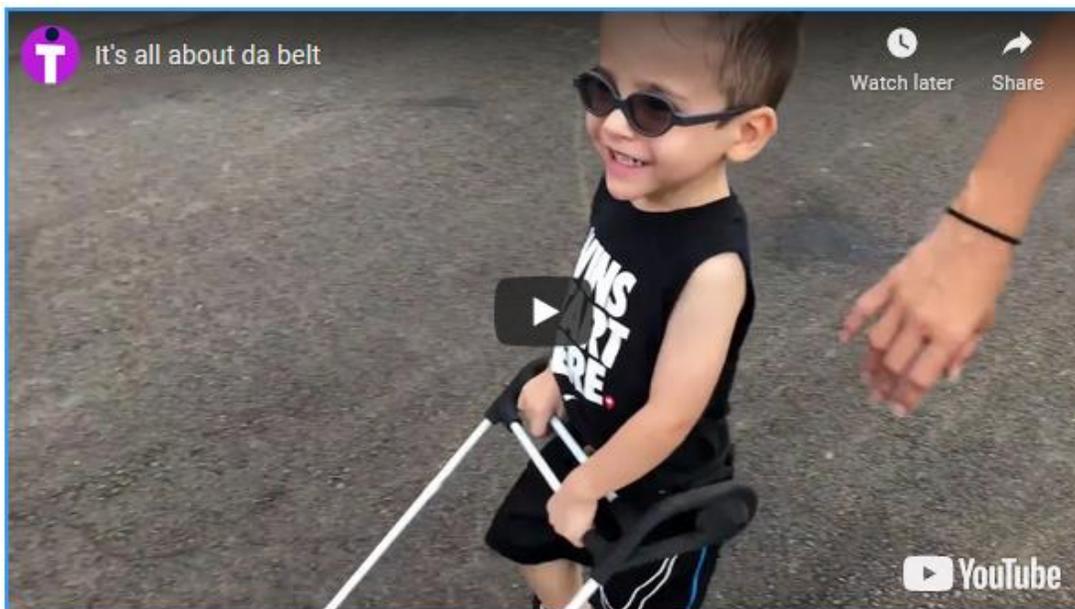
To listen: <https://www.safetoddles.org/podcast>

| March 2021 | | |
|------------|---|---|
| March 1 | Geri Darko, Montana | Used canes with two boys |
| March 8 | Becky Hommer, Maryland | Used canes with three girls |
| March 15 | Elga Joffee, North Carolina (formerly of New York) | Proponent from the beginning and used canes with one boy and one girl |
| March 22 | Mary Stap, Michigan | Used cane with one boy |
| March 29 | Edgar Vargas, California | Used canes with two kids |

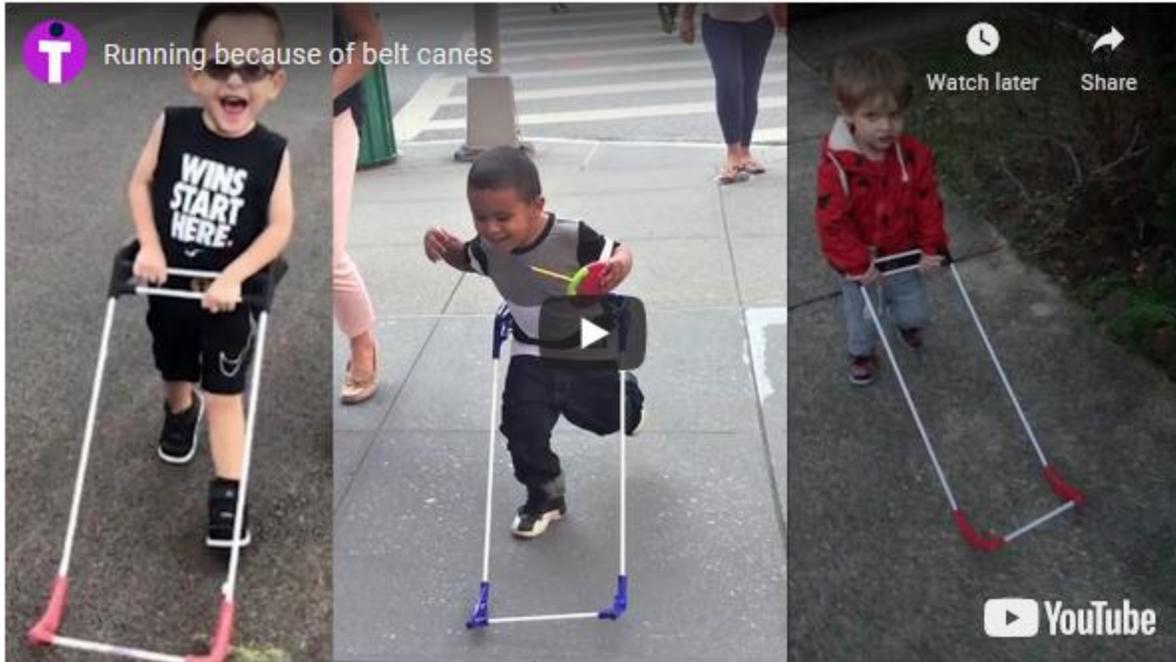
Tik Tok Update

In February we created weekly one-minute videos set to popular music

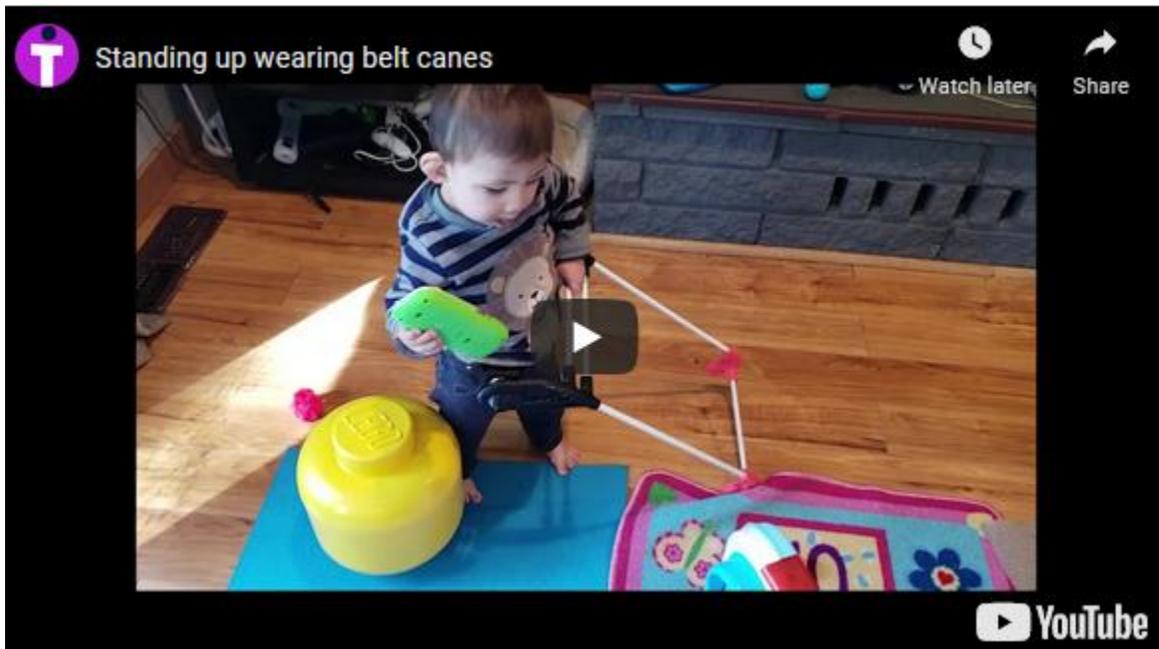
1. All about da belt, no trouble (set to Meghan Trainor)



2. Running with self-confidence (set to Beyonce')



3. Standing-up on my own (set to Lenny Kravitz)



How to Obtain a Cane

Purchase a cane - \$180* per cane set - cane ships approximately in three to five weeks.

Free Canes - We are committed providing free canes to any child in need, because belt canes are essential safety equipment that enables toddlers with visual impairments to develop to their full potential.

Option one - provide videos and feedback - cane ships in two to three months.

Safe Toddles seeks families and professionals to join our video library by contributing before and with belt cane videos. These videos assist in improving belt cane design, demonstrating outcomes to potential users and demonstrates the abilities of toddlers and preschoolers who are blind once they acquire consistently safe mobility.

Everyone who is obtaining a pediatric belt cane is encouraged to consider participating by submitting videos to us - we need you!

Option two - Submit measurements cane ships in four to six months.

*Limited quantity of reduced cost cane sets available to families (submit in-take form, use buy now to pay with a credit/debit card)

Save the Dates!

March 18, 2021

Dr. Grace Ambrose-Zaken will be presenting double session the importance of safe mobility to achieving developmental milestones for children who are congenitally blind or severe visually impaired Webinar
10 to 11 AM PST

To Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEIc-qtrjoqGtbVz8BkcTNNN8NwCflt4rIx>

March 26, 2021

Dr. Grace Ambrose-Zaken will be presenting double session the importance of safe mobility to achieving developmental milestones for children who are congenitally blind or severe visually impaired at the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference
Part I 8:30 to 10 am MST and Part II 10:30 to noon MST

To Register: <https://denverearlychildhood.org/trainings-events/rocky-mountain-early-childhood-conference/>



DONATE

Help Safe Toddles give children who are blind the freedom of independent mobility.

www.safetoddles.org/donate