

A photograph of four children (Xavier, Zion, Marco, and Scofield) sitting in a red inflatable tube on a lake. They are all wearing blue life jackets and smiling. The tube is moving across the water, leaving a white wake. The background shows a dense line of green trees on the shore.

Xavier, Zion, Marco, and Scofield go tubing for the first time at Karis Family Camp. Joy Bible Camp, Bancroft, ON, 2026

Karis Celebrates

Fall 2026 Partner Newsletter

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A New Summer Camp Week for Families



Carla on the swings at Joy Bible Camp, ON

Karis Family Camps provide families with opportunities for new experiences. New friendships form around shared meals and campfires. New connections grow between families who understand one another's experiences caring for a loved one with disabilities. Guests try things they never imagined themselves doing—like jumping off rocks into a lake, waterskiing, sharing songs and fun dances during Family Sharing Night, or simply stepping into a space where they can be fully themselves and don't have to explain their differences.

This summer marked the beginning of a new partnership between Karis Disability Services and Joy Bible Camp—an expansion made possible by donors who wanted to see Family Camp help more families experiencing disability. Joy Bible Camp has been hosting families on beautiful Lake Faraday for nearly 80 years. With activities during the day and a wonderful staff team, Karis families were invited to participate in everything Joy had to offer.

Joy Bible Camp Stories **Canada**

A New Summer Camp Week for Families *(story continued from the cover)*

Before camp even began, Joy staff joined Karis' volunteer training to learn how to better support guests with disabilities. Their willingness to listen and learn helped create an environment where families felt understood, valued, and included. Throughout the week, volunteers put that learning into action. They built sandcastles and encouraged campers to try the waterslide. They

danced and sang during chapel services and campfires, making it an unforgettable week for families.

For Marco and Mercedes, camp provided a gift they hadn't experienced in 14 years: a date night, made possible by Caregivers' Night Out. While their five children, Domenic, Xavier, Scofield, Carla, and Amelia, were cared for by trained and loving volunteers, they were able to be together for a few hours over dinner and simply enjoy time as a couple. Their youngest child, Amelia, who is a year and a half old, has never spent time away from Mercedes.

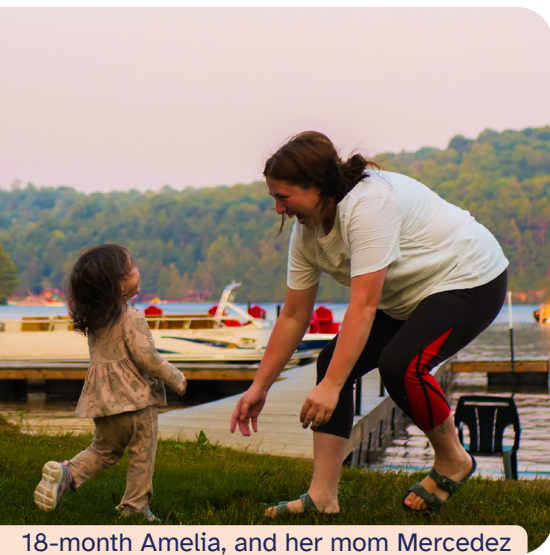
"That time for just us felt unreal," shared Mercedes. "I didn't think we were going to make it and I'm so glad that everybody encouraged us and reassured us that it was going to be okay. I feel so good."

Fifty-one weeks of the year, many of these families are navigating appointments, advocacy,

caregiving responsibilities, and under-resourced disability supports. Karis Family Camp offers a new experience: a chance to breathe, rest, connect, and belong. "When the kids are having a bad day, we play the slideshow [of pictures from camp] and it calms them, and they love seeing their pictures and remembering what a fun time it was," Mercedes said.

As camp ended, several people shared, "I wish we could bottle up this feeling." What they were describing was a community where people are known, welcomed, valued, and loved – by God and others. We're grateful that His grace and loving-kindness are evident through the support of volunteers, staff, and donors.

Partners in Belonging are the financial engine backing this work with donations and prayers too. Thank you for helping create communities where everybody belongs.



18-month Amelia, and her mom Mercedes

Thank you, Mark Wallace!

After nearly twenty years as Karis' director of global partnerships, organizational culture, and spiritual life, Mark Wallace has entered his next chapter of ministry with a cherished Karis partner. This past summer, God led Mark into a new role: executive director for Elim Lodge Ministries.

Mark, his wife Eva, and their three children have served and volunteered at many Karis Family Camps, as well as in Guatemala, championing communities where everybody belongs.

In Karis' global work, Mark has worked closely with our in-country partners, navigating our programs through natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, civil war, and many transitions, prioritizing the health, safety, and education of all the people we support globally.

Thank you, Mark, for your dedication and hard work over the last two decades to create more places where everybody belongs so people with disabilities can thrive and be celebrated in communities!



Mark and students in 2018 in El Zapatillo, a mountainous Indigenous community in Guatemala

Our Global Impact Through Belongathon 2026

The Belongathon is a community outreach fundraiser created by Karis Disability Services to raise awareness and support people with developmental disabilities in Canada and around the world.

This year, half of all funds raised are going to causes in Canada like Family Camp, and the other half is going to global projects, like building an accessible playground is Asella, Ethiopia.

Asella is about 150 km south of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, and is home to over 150,000 people. The planned accessible playground will be the best play structure in the city and will be used by students at the academy during the week and by the greater community on the weekends.



The accessible playground will be built on the Horizons Academy grounds, serving 1,200 students at the academy and the greater community of Asella, Ethiopia

This centre of accessible play sends a powerful and encouraging message to the people of Asella: that children with disabilities belong, and that everybody is invited to have fun together. Later this fall, construction for the accessible playground will begin.

Scan the QR code below to watch a video from Dr. Megersa, director of Horizons Academy, showing and telling us more about this exciting project!



\$127,096

raised at Belongathon 2026

1,922

Belongathoners in Ontario and Saskatchewan

238

volunteers at 16 events in Ontario and Saskatchewan



Volunteers at the Belongathon in Waterloo, ON, 2026

An Update on Last Year's Belongathon Global Project

Mount Moriah International School in Nairobi, Kenya, is a Christian boarding school that educates students with and without disabilities.

Funds from the 2025 Belongathon went toward building and furnishing a physiotherapy room, specifically for students and members of the community with cerebral palsy and other

developmental disabilities.

The construction of the room is completed, and has been named the Karis at Mount Moriah Ability Hub. The room is multi-purpose: twice a week, a physiotherapist visits and attends scheduled appointments. And on Sundays during church and throughout the school week, it serves as a sensory room where students can relax,

explore, and be stimulated in the way that suits their unique needs.

Looking ahead, leaders at Mount Moriah are hoping to acquire more assistive devices and learning materials to better equip the community and to encourage more people to seek support and opportunities to help them thrive.

Meet Some of Our Partners **Global**

Rev. Meshack Mbugwa Kenya



Rev. Meshack Mbugwa, from Kenya, and Dwayne Milley, Vice President of Engagement and Partnerships

“After my first encounter with Karis, seeing how you serve people with disabilities, I went home a changed man,” shared Rev. Meshack.

Rev. Meshack Mbugwa is the founder and president of Alkebu Leadership Development Centre; the founder of Mount Moriah and Rare Gem Christian Schools in Nairobi, Kenya; and the Missions Director for Bible League Canada and Africa.

Through his partnership with Karis Disability Services, Rev. Meshack brings a lens of disability inclusion to the organizations he leads. This fruitful partnership

means that thousands of pastors and leaders are trained and equipped to advocate for people with disabilities, and our partner schools in Nairobi can grow in accessibility and inclusion.

“We may not be able to do everything, but the little bit that we can do goes a long way to changing perspectives,” shared Rev. Meshack. “All that you have done and the seeds you have sown continue to change and bring an impact to many countries in Africa.”

Rudy and Sully Rojas Guatemala

Rudy and Sully Rojas have worked with children for 36 years, starting when they were a newly married couple who dreamed of helping people in Guatemala.

They founded Children’s Homes International, group homes for children who were orphaned and abandoned, including those with disabilities, in Guatemala City. As they expanded their services, they partnered with Karis Disability Services to offer Child Sponsorship, which helped children

attend school and receive proper nutrition, school supplies, uniforms, and medicine.

Now that Child Sponsorship is ending, they are looking forward to the future of our global work through Partners in Belonging, which will help strengthen community outreach and reach even more children in the many communities they serve.

“We praise the Lord for this opportunity,” shared Sully, reflecting on the last 36 years of partnership with Karis. “It really was God’s call for us.”

“We are teaching values – and Christian values – that will be so helpful for the future of every child,” added Rudy.



Sully and Rudy Rojas, from Guatemala, have partnered with Karis for almost two decades

What Can I Do?

Pray

Please pray for our global partners, Rev. Meshack Mbugwa, Rudy and Sully Rojas, and all other leaders and pastors as they create communities where everybody belongs.

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