

# Skaters take to the ice for Rotary Home

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Early in the morning on Feb. 25, Jake Maarse and Kevin Frost had the canal largely to themselves.

While many were just getting out of bed, at 7:45 a.m. Mr. Maarse, a long-distance speed skater, and Kevin Frost, a blind and deaf speed skater and Paralympian, strapped on their skates and began their 100-kilometre skate along the canal in support of the Ottawa Rotary Home.

Paying no mind to the weather or others on the world's longest skating rink, the pair continued their skate until 2 p.m.

Already, Mr. Maarse and Mr. Frost have raised more than \$3,000 to support the Ottawa Rotary Home, but have hopes of raising even more.

"I like to do things to support the Rotary Home because they are a very worthwhile organization," said Mr. Maarse, who is a Rotarian. "It's a small place if you compare it with the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the Ottawa Hospital, but some of these small organizations really need the help."

All the money raised will be used to support the adult programming at the newly opened Ottawa Rotary



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Ottawa speed skater Jake Maarse (right) is seen here leading the way for blind-deaf speed skater Kevin Frost on the morning of Feb. 24. The two men spent the day skating 100 kilometres along the canal to raise money for the new Ottawa Rotary Home on Bank St.

Home, located at 4637 Bank St. The new home contains an eight-bed adult wing and the money will be used to help families with young adults 21 years of age and older receive some respite care.

The Ottawa Rotary Home allows families who are caring for a child or young adult with a physical disability, or who has complex medical need, receive a break. The caregiver can arrange to leave the child at the home for the day, to run some errands, or for overnight and weekend stays.

"It's feels gratifying [to help the Ottawa Rotary Home] because it's a passion I have to help as many people as I can," said Mr. Frost. "I believe in positive energy and all of us in our society should be doing what we can do to help the people who need it."

"Jake and I are going to attack this mission, finish

it and we are going to be able to help a lot of families this year. I get goose bumps thinking about it."

In 2002 Mr. Frost was diagnosed with Usher syndrome and currently has tunnel vision of only 8% and only 15% hearing.

"When I was 11-years-old I lost my hearing and my hearing doctor said 'I notice you can still communicate' and I didn't realize I taught myself how to lip read. That's the way I thought everybody lived," said Mr. Frost.

At age 30 his vision worsened and friends and family convinced him to go to an optometrist who told him his vision had been bad for the last five years.

"He said I have a condition called Usher syndrome, where you lose your hearing young and your vision later in life so they took my driver's license and job away," he said.

It was a difficult experi-

ence for Mr. Frost until a friend suggested he should take up speed skating.

"I took my work-a-holism and transferred it into speed skating," Mr. Frost explained. "I got into the speed skating circuit and did short track and long track."

In 2007 he was ranked first in Ontario.

He just returned from an international master championship where he competed against 120 skaters from across the world and he took home a bronze.

"My goal is to open the 2010 Paralympics," Mr. Frost said. "I'm the first Paralympian to ever skate there and probably the last because they are closing the oval after the Olympics."

Speed skating is not a Paralympic sport.

The Ottawa Rotary Home Foundation is thrilled the two skaters took the time to raise money for the home.

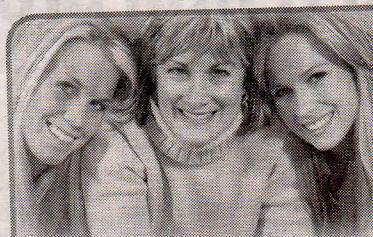
"I think it's fantastic," said Carolyn Piche, director of development at the foundation.

For more information about Mr. Frost or to donate to his fundraising or the Ottawa Rotary Home, visit his Web site at [www.deafblind-speedskater.com](http://www.deafblind-speedskater.com).

To donate for Mr. Maarse go onto the Ottawa Rotary Home Foundation's Web site at [www.orhfoundation.ca](http://www.orhfoundation.ca) and or contact Ms. Piche at 613-837-7376.

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