

## Starlight Kids usher in Spooky Season with fun event at local hotel



Halloween came early to Aurora on Saturday as more than 100 families celebrated the start of Spooky Season at Microtel Inn & Suites with Starlight Canada.

Dubbed "Trick or Suite", the Starlight-hosted event brought thrills and chills and some of families' favourite characters from movies and TV to the hotel in Aurora's northeast, offering an inclusive and accessible trick-or-treating event for seriously ill children and their families.

Starlight took over an entire floor of the hotel for the occasion, decorating each room with a different theme designed to spark imagination, joy and, of course, a thrill and chill.

The annual Trick or Suite event was established by Starlight, realizing that trick-or-treating door-to-door is not a fully accessible experience for those who use wheelchairs and other forms of mobility aids.

"We support seriously ill and chronically ill children, as well as the disabled," says Kaitlin Kiraly, Children's Services Officer for Starlight Canada. "We have kids who are, unfortunately, terminally ill, kids with cancer, cerebral palsy, spina bifida [and] what we hear time and time again is if they didn't have Trick or Suite, they wouldn't be able to trick or treat because of mobility issues. It's the family's chance to trick-or-treat together in a safe and supportive environment.

"It's so cute to see kids and their families come dressed up and actually get to experience a Halloween they wouldn't otherwise get to. We often hear that it positively affects both their mental health as well as their confidence levels. One thing we do hear a lot, actually, is even with siblings it helps the entire family. A lot of times the seriously ill child is going through the treatment, hospital visits or whatever it might be, for some siblings who don't get as much attention as that, siblings get to meet other siblings who go through the same or similar experiences."

It is "beautiful," she adds, to see these siblings form connections with others who understand the journey and form "a deeper connection than what they would with their friends."

"Trick or Suite is one of the many ways we serve at moments through the year, while families are going through treatments or hospital stays, just to create those family memories."

Families interested in learning more about the services and events hosted by the organization and to become a Starlight Family can visit [www.starlightcanada.org](http://www.starlightcanada.org) and begin an application process. It's as simple as getting a sign-off from a physician stating the

child's diagnosis and a team goes through each application to see if they meet criteria.

Successful applicants are then invited to be a part of programs.

**By Brock Weir**