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LAUMANN, Silken

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# Laumann and family benefit from Samsung's autistic-friendly app

*Look at Me app helps autistic children communicate*

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Mississauga rowing legend Silken Laumann knows the challenges autistic children face and how it impacts their families.

Her stepdaughter, Kilee, continues to have difficulties communicating at the age of 21.

That's where the Look at Me app from Samsung can come in handy. It's an app that allows autistic children to improve their ability to make eye contact and interpret facial expressions through fun, eight-minute modules each day.

Laumann, now a Samsung brand ambassador, believes it can be life-changing for families with children on the autism spectrum.

"It's so cool because it was opening this window (for Kilee)," said Laumann, well known for her heroic effort in coming back from a severe knee injury to win Olympic bronze in 1992.

"She found a way to access YouTube and music and suddenly, she's in control and showing us what



Samsung photo

From left to right, Silken Laumann, stepdaughter Kilee Patchell-Evans and husband David Patchell-Evans, use the Look at Me app from Samsung. It's an app that helps teach autistic children to communicate.

she's interested in, which really hadn't happened before."

The Look at Me app was designed by a team of psychologists, specialists and doctors and launched in 2015.

As part of this year's campaign, Samsung will be donating 500 tablets

pre-loaded with the Look at Me app to families who might not otherwise have access to the technology.

Laumann and her family have been using the app with Kilee for about a year and in that time, they've noticed a lot of improvements in the facial recognition aspect of the tool.

"Sometimes (autistic children) really struggle with what facial expressions mean," Laumann said.

"For Kilee at least, the world is so overstimulating. She's getting thousands of pieces of information every single minute, so she tends to look down

and be inward."

Laumann says because Kilee doesn't talk a lot, she and her husband have difficulty trying to get her to tell them about what happened during the day when she was with her caregivers.

Tablets have helped somewhat in that regard

as Kilee is able to take pictures throughout her day and show her family what she did.

Laumann was amazed with how quickly her stepdaughter was able to understand and navigate through tablet technology when she was introduced to it.