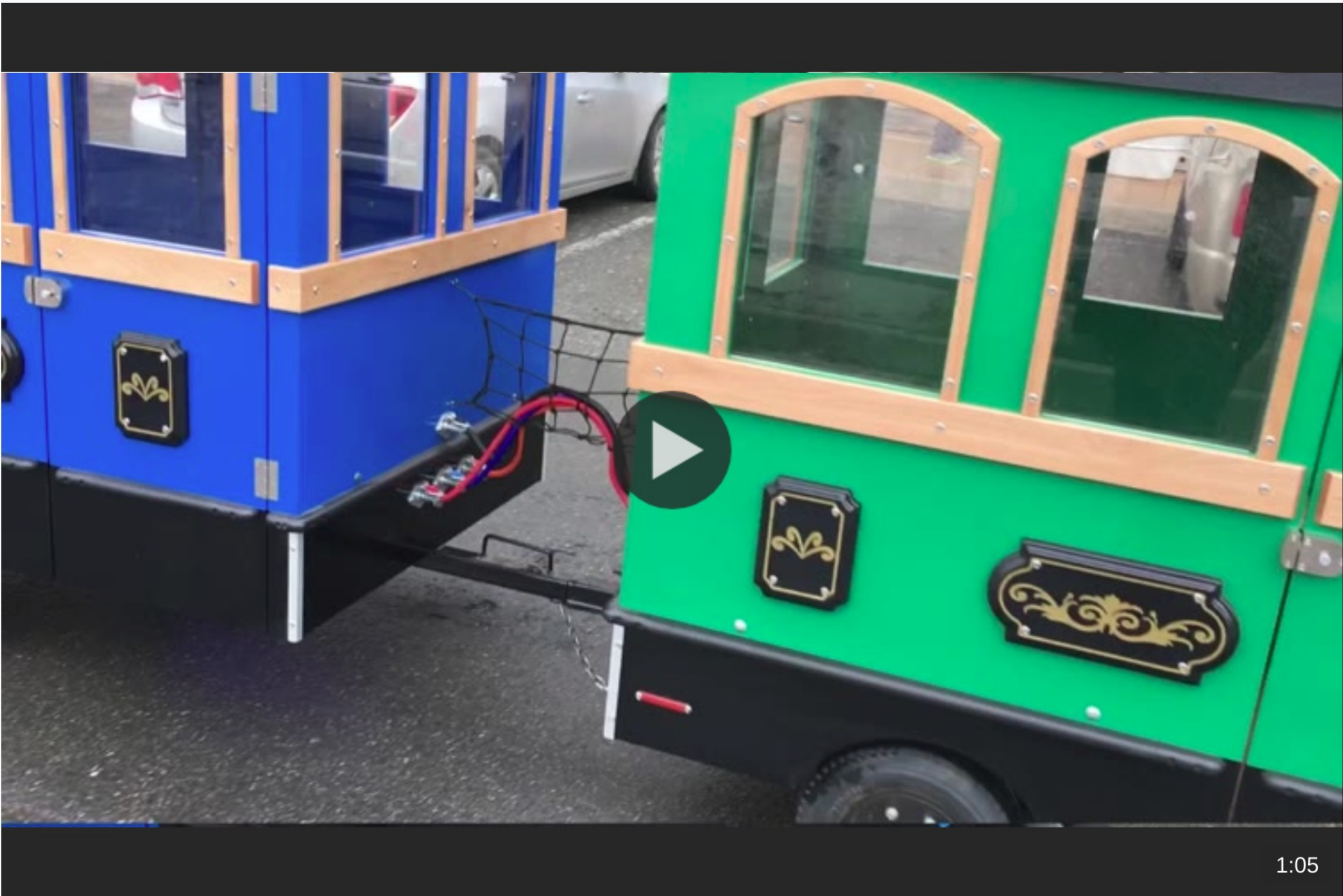


# Video: All aboard! Arthritic child's wish comes true



Saint John • A passenger train has returned to Saint John, and five-year-old Coby Challoner was the first to board.

Challoner was invited by the Children's Wish Foundation to be the first rider on a new community promotion at the East Point shopping centre in Saint John. The diesel-powered, multi-coloured, five-car train made a couple laps around the parking lot in the eastern retail district Thursday with the youngster and his parents in tow.

It was a special treat for the Saint John child who lost much of his early years battling juvenile arthritis. Also known as pediatric rheumatic disease, juvenile arthritis is a broad term for many similar autoimmune and inflammatory conditions affecting children under the age of 16, according to the Arthritis Foundation. As many as 24,000 Canadian children and teens live with arthritis, stated the Arthritis Society.

Coby was eight months old when he first started showing symptoms, his mother said. Ashley Challoner said her son became feverish, lethargic, was vomiting and not eating in April 2012. He ran a prolonged 104-degree fever, wasn't mobile and had a low blood count before he ended up in the care of specialists at the IWK in Halifax, she said.

Two weeks later, they had a diagnosis and treatment began.

"It was touch and go," Challoner said.



Five-year-old Coby Challoner was invited for a special train ride at East Point in Saint John on Thursday.  
Colin McPhail/Telegraph-Journal

Coby responded to the medication and what was 10 oral medications and two injections is now down to one daily injection. She said he's now considered in remission.

"Before we weren't sure if he was going to come home with us and now he's home every day with us," she said. "He's just like any other kid. He jumps, flips and he's very energetic. You could never tell he has arthritis."

The Children's Wish Foundation sent Coby, his three siblings and the parents on family vacation to Florida two years ago. Knowing his love for trains, the foundation invited the family for a free ride Thursday to launch the new promotion.

"He loves Thomas [the Tank Engine]. Anything trains," Challoner said.

"It's nice to do stuff like this. He's afraid of people of lot so when he gets to do stuff. it opens him up to new things, so it's nice for him to get out and do stuff."

The train, complete with literal bells and whistles as well as lighting and music, is a brand new build by train replica company in Georgia. It will be used in conjunction with promotions and community events at East Point.

The train will be available to the public beginning Friday until Easter Monday and then again on holidays and special dates. Upcoming rides will take place on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday before returning to 10:30 to 7 p.m. on Easter Monday.

Rides will be \$5 and tickets can purchased at Ana Banana.

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