

The Centre for Family Literacy is dedicated to helping families grow and prosper.



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

June 2009

“Investing in literacy, especially for families and youth at risk, is an effective crime prevention strategy. Early prevention strategies, that include literacy, can help reduce the risk factors such as poverty, unemployment, and isolation that can lead to crime.”

*MCL Factsheet
2004*

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New Classroom on Wheels (C.O.W.) Bus Joins The Herd



Some countries launch ships, in Edmonton we launch C.O.W.s. On June 4, the Centre for Family Literacy put the old 1981 C.O.W. bus out to pasture and launched a new C.O.W. onto the streets of Edmonton.

The old bus had been on the road since September 2000 as a C.O.W., delivering family literacy programs to over 6,000 children and adults in Edmonton. It was an initiative of Success by 6®, with the program provided by Centre for Family Literacy.

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A Focus on Fathers

For many of us, our childhood memories of nursery rhymes and books involve our mothers, but fathers also have an important role as their children's first teachers.

Many fathers feel uncomfortable reading, singing and rhyming with their children. Reading the sports section of the newspaper or singing a song from their favourite rock group is okay, but reading "One Duck Stuck" or singing a nursery rhyme is just not for them.

To encourage fathers to be more involved with their children's early literacy development, the Centre for Family Literacy in partnership with West Edmonton Parent Link is piloting a new program. Based on the Centre's Books for Babies program, the pilot is four-weeks in length and is for dads with babies under one year of age.



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Back row: Kim Irving, ATB Financial; Phyllis A. Arnold; Minister Dave Hancock; Jim Hutton. **Front row:** Ilene Fleming, Success by 6®; Jonna Grad, Centre for Family Literacy; Kimberley Onclin, Centre for Family Literacy.

New C.O.W. Bus *Continued from page 1*

Donors, partners, families and friends attended the official launch at ATB Financial, Manning Crossing Branch with the Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Alberta Education, as the master of ceremonies. Minister Hancock emphasized how important Family Literacy programs are in encouraging the development of language and other basic skills of pre-school children and stated, "That's why the Centre's Classroom on Wheels program is so important in this province."

The Bus is a drop-in bookmobile that offers an opportunity for families with few resources to borrow from a collection of children's books for free. Through informal programming, parents are provided with literacy support for their pre-school children and learn how to carry on literacy activities in their homes.

Ilene Fleming, Director of Success by 6®, thanked the Centre for its ongoing delivery of this program noting that

the C.O.W. program "focuses on raising awareness of the importance of the early years in children's development – building a strong environment to support children in these critical years."

Kimberley Onclin, Associate Executive Director of the Centre, thanked those who had funded the purchase of the bus: ATB Financial, Phyllis A. Arnold Learning Fund, Jim Hutton and An Evening of Wine and Words fundraising event. She explained that "Through family literacy programs, like the C.O.W. Bus, all parents can provide their children with the early language and literacy foundations essential to success in school and in life. We are grateful to Success by 6® and all of our funders who support the work of the Centre."



Focus on Fathers *Continued from page 1*

Over the course of the program, fathers will learn that reading almost anything is showing their children that reading is an important and pleasurable experience. They will also learn what to look for in books for their babies, discover different types of books that will be of interest to them and their children, and learn nursery rhymes and finger plays.

The fathers will spend an hour each week playing and learning with their children. They will discover that reading, rhyming and singing with their children are enjoyable activities with life-long rewards. Literacy develops in families first, and fathers play an integral role in nurturing their children's early learning.

The Effect of Early Experiences on Brain Development

The development of children's brains depends on many factors including the emotional, intellectual, nutritional and medical support that their families provide for them.

Research shows that interactions with other people and objects are vital for children's brains to grow and develop, especially during the first three years when trillions of connections between brain cells are made. The ability to understand language, solve problems and get along with people is influenced by experiences as infants and young children. Those who are rarely spoken with, who have few books and toys and who have limited opportunities to explore their environment lack stimulation for optimal brain development.

The Centre's family literacy programs, among others, start working with children and their families at birth to help parents and caregivers provide the early interactions critical for brain growth and development. All parents are encouraged to talk, sing and read with their children. These actions stimulate children's understanding and use of language, and language proficiency is the foundation for developing literacy skills.

Family literacy programs also provide participants with the opportunity to interact with other children and adults in a positive environment. Group interaction allows children to learn to cooperate with others, to cope with frustration, to resolve conflicts in appropriate ways and to develop self-confidence. The more confident they are, the more willing children are to try new challenges, be resilient in the face of difficulties and gain the experiences required for healthy brain development.

Family literacy activities, which all families can do, are positive, language and literacy based interactions that occur naturally between young children and their parents and caregivers. Family literacy programs are offered to families who may need extra encouragement and support to provide stimulating interactions that facilitate the development of children's brains and, with that, their language and literacy skills.

Cultivating Connections

Global Perspectives & Practices in Family Literacy



NATIONAL FAMILY LITERACY CONFERENCE

July 15 – 17, 2010

Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton

Join us for the National Family Literacy Conference in 2010 when national and international experts and family literacy practitioners will come together to share their perspectives and discover opportunities for the growth of family literacy.

Guest speakers will include:

- Elsa Auerbach (University of Massachusetts, Boston)
Author of *Making Meaning, Making Change*
- Thomas G. Sticht (International Literacy Consultant)
Author of "Toward a Multiple Life Cycles Education Policy"
- Peter Hannon (University of Sheffield, U.K.)
ORIM Framework and REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy)
- Eve Gregory (University of London, U.K.)
Author of *Many Pathways to Literacy: Young Children Learning with Siblings, Grandparents, Peers and Communities*

Hosted by:  Centre for Family Literacy

Online donations to the Centre can be made through CanadaHelps.org



The Centre for Family Literacy gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the following:



Edmonton & Area
Child & Family Services Region 6



Human Resources and
Social Development Canada



Blue Rodeo's Jim Cuddy and Greg Keelor Perform for Literacy

It was a night to remember as over 200 guests gathered at the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald for An Evening of Wine and Words and an incredible performance by Jim Cuddy and Greg Keelor.

Mark Scholz was a jack-of-all-trades as the master of ceremonies, auctioneer and sommelier. The live auction was fast paced as guests tried to outbid each other for the opportunity to have Jim and Greg join them for dinner.

The highlight of the evening was the up close and personal performance by Jim and Greg that kept the guests riveted to their seats. The evening was definitely a memory to be cherished, and it raised over \$49,000 for the Classroom on Wheels (C.O.W.) Bus program.



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Literacy Develops in Families First

The Centre for Family literacy is dedicated to helping Alberta grow and prosper. Our innovative programs, training and research help Alberta families achieve what they imagine - improved education, jobs and health.

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