



The Centre for Family Literacy

Centre Page

Our Vision:

*A healthy,
literate society
where all
are able to
contribute and
succeed.*

Carnival Celebrates Family Literacy

For most folks carnivals are a place to wander, explore, participate and just have fun – maybe even bring home a prize.

Families did just that at the Family Literacy Carnival in celebration of National Family Literacy Day. The event was hosted by the Golden Key

International Honour Student Society of MacEwan University and the Centre for Family Literacy.

A series of themed stations focused on topics like science, music, health, history, technology and numbers were setup on the main floor of the Robbins Health Centre.

The stations were loosely connected to programs offered

at MacEwan University and were developed to showcase a variety of activities that families could do together to support literacy and learning.

The families wandered from station to station at their own pace participating in activities ranging from singing songs to playing games on a big screen. One five year old said his favourite part of the event was the insect exhibit where he was able to touch a hissing cockroach. Others found the local history centre intriguing as they got to touch the fur, horns and bones of bison and to make a teepee.

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Breakfast Celebrates the Importance of Family Literacy

The Centre hosted its annual Leading with Literacy Breakfast on Thursday, January 24. Over 200 people attended and were entertained and challenged by the guest speaker Todd Hirsch, senior economist for ATB Financial. Mr. Hirsch, the bank's top economic expert, expressed the view that a literate workforce is an economic necessity for Alberta. He stressed the important role that all of us play in supporting learning as parents, educators and employers in business and government. Although a serious topic, Mr. Hirsch managed to engage the audience with a very creative and often humorous approach to learning.

A highlight of the breakfast was the recognition of the 2013 Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Award nominees and winners. The awards were created in 2007 to honor the efforts of individuals in their own personal learning journeys and those who support that learning through their leadership. Jim Hole was on hand to present the awards and read an excerpt from one of his mother's books on the value of libraries and the importance of literacy.

Nominees in the Community Leadership category included the Literacy for Life Foundation for their outstanding delivery of family and adult literacy programs in the Municipal District of Foothills and Councillor Don Iveson for his work on the Learning Cities Initiative. WorleyParsons Canada, Edmonton Operations was the recipient of the award this year. They were recognized for their support of the Centre for Family Literacy's work over the past six years that included funding

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March
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Carnival

Continued



The kids weren't the only ones having fun – parents were seen dressing up at the storytelling station and using the heart-rate monitor and stethoscope at the health centre. One child could not stop laughing as he tapped his father's kneecap over and over again with a reflex hammer.

Grade 7 teacher Nicole Baker brought her three children to the event. "It's a good way for learning and literacy to become more of a family event ... its teaching them in other ways with puzzles and games," she said.

For new mom, Rebecca Thompson, the fond memories of her own childhood trips to the library and bedtime stories motivated her to bring her son to the event. "You can't start too young when it comes to literacy," she said and was excited to learn the Centre offers Books for Babies programs throughout the city.

At the end of their visit each family received a complimentary book to take home to share together.

Breakfast

Continued

programs, encouraging staff to volunteer for the organization and sharing their expertise so that adults and families in the Edmonton area can access programs that support their learning.

The recipient of the Adult Learner Award was Judy Tran. Judy was recognized for her support of her children's literacy and for her commitment to her own learning. In 2000, she began bringing her children to the Classroom on Wheels Bus program and when all of her children were in school Judy decided to focus on her on improving her own skills. Thus began her work with her tutor Mary-Francis. Judy said, "Mary-Francis helped me to build my self-esteem, to solve problems in my life and work. I am so happy to have a great tutor."

There were four other finalists in the Adult Learner Category: Elaine Ho, Terri Morrissey, Sarah Pollock and Kathryn Vitois. This year's awards jury was most impressed with the dedication of these nominees to their children's learning, their support of other parents in the programs and their commitment to family literacy.



*Geoff Rackette,
WorleyParsons, Edmonton*



*Judy Tran (right), and her
tutor Mary-Francis Smith*

Congratulations to the finalists and winners.

Plugged In Parenting

“There’s something that’s so engrossing about the kind of interactions people do with screens that they wall out the world.”

Sherry Turkle, director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Initiative on Technology and Self, has been studying how parental use of technology affects children and young adults. After five years and 300 interviews, she has concluded that feelings of jealousy and competition are widespread in children whose parents spent a lot of time with technology.

In her studies, Dr. Turkle states, “Over and over, kids raised the same three examples of feeling hurt and not wanting to show it when their mom or dad would be on their devices instead of paying attention to them: at meals, during pickup after either school or an extracurricular activity, and during sports events.”

Dr. Turkle said that she recognizes the pressure adults feel to make themselves constantly available for work, but added that she believes something else is compelling them to keep checking the screen.

“There’s something that’s so engrossing about the kind of interactions people do with screens that they wall out the world,” she said. “I’ve talked to children who try to get their parents to stop texting while driving and they get resistance, ‘Oh, just one, just one more quick one, honey.’ It’s like ‘one more drink.’”

There is little research on how parents’ constant use of such technology affects children, but experts say there is no question that engaged parenting (explaining things to children and responding to their questions) remains the foundation of early childhood learning.

During Family Day 2013 the city of Edmonton encouraged parents to participate in Family Day Unplugged, a challenge for families to spend the day away from technology. The city of Edmonton joined 21 municipalities challenging each other to see which could log the most time unplugged.

The Centre for Family Literacy is also promoting unplugged parenting with a weekly advertising campaign. Be sure to look for our ads in the Thursday edition of the Edmonton Journal to see how engaging with your child for even fifteen minutes a day can build the foundation for life-long literacy.

Learn more in Julie Scelfo’s article: “The Risks of Parenting While Plugged in”. http://nytimes.com/2010/06/10/garden/10childtech.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Dates to Remember

National Volunteer Week (NVW)

April 21 - 27

NVW pays tribute to the millions of volunteers who donate their time and talents to our communities.

Family Literacy Training Institute

May 6 - 10

Professional development focused on family literacy models.

Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton

Links Fore Literacy Golf Tournament

Wednesday August 21

The Links at Spruce Grove Golf Course



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



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



Investing in Literacy

Support for the Centre and our work has been growing over the years within the business community.



*Wray Steedsman,
EPCOR and
Jonna Grad, CFL*

Two recent donations demonstrate this support. EPCOR's Community Investment program has three pillars based on the essential life elements of strong communities and strong families: water, energy and education. The Centre was the recipient of a grant from EPCOR in support of our new program 3, 2, 1 Fun! In a letter acknowledging the grant, Ruth Kelly, Chair of their Community Essentials Council stated, "3,2,1, FUN! is an important initiative that will help make our community a stronger and more vibrant place to live."



*PCL and CFL
Staff*

PCL had over 400 employees exceed a yearly goal of 35 hours of professional development last year. All of the employees who achieved this goal decided to forego their personal reward and instead forward a donation to the Centre. Mike Olsson, Regional HR/ PD Manager, Canadian Industrial, stated "learning is a never-ending process for both the individual employee and for PCL as a whole. As each one of us strives to improve and increase our knowledge, skills and abilities, so does our organization endeavor to become more effective and more efficient."

The generosity of the business sector has played a key role in allowing us to expand the scope of the programs and services that we provide to Alberta families.

Essential Skills Begin at Home

The traditional definition of literacy is considered to be the ability to read and write or the ability to use language to read, write, listen and speak. It refers to reading and writing at a level adequate for communication that lets one understand and communicate ideas in order to take part in society – from navigating the maze of options on touch-tone phones and internet banking to acquiring family health information.

Essential skills are referred to as the abilities needed for the workplace. They include the four skills associated with literacy – reading, writing, document use, and numeracy – plus computer use, thinking, oral communication, working with others and continuous learning.

The foundation for learning these skills begins much earlier than your first job. Parents are teaching them to their children through activities that are part of their daily lives. Parents who talk with and read to their children provide a solid foundation in language and early literacy that is essential to their success in formal school settings and later in the workplace.

The Essential Skills insert enclosed with this newsletter clearly shows the relationship between the skills one used in daily life and those used at work. If you receive the newsletter by email, the link to this document is http://famlit.ca/resources/Essential_Skills_2013.pdf

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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