

**Fostering connections between dads and kids
in the Nipissing District**

A Special Issue about Dads

At Ontario Early Years Centres, we believe that fathers play a vital role in the healthy development of their children. That's why many of our centres offer programs that give dads the opportunity to see a different side of fathering, while also providing them with a chance to meet and connect with other dads, and talk about parenting. In this issue, we share some of these programs with you and some of the things we have learned about engaging dads.

In the past, a father's role was often overlooked and under-appreciated. Dad may sometimes have been a source of fun, but more likely, he was the disciplinarian and provider – the 'one in charge'. Today, that image has changed, as more fathers are actively involved in their children's lives.

In North Bay, this important connection is being fostered through a program called Fathers Matter. A seven-week initiative, Fathers Matter encourages responsible involvement of fathers, grand-fathers, uncles, brothers, or



any man who is influencing a child. The program is dedicated to positive life outcomes through the quality of the father-child relationship, and understanding the significance of 'father involvement' as a protective condition for healthy child development. Fathers Matter uses the FI-BOCC Program© curriculum, generated from research encompassing 'father involvement' and material from The Virtues Project™.

We also encourage dads that attend to participate in other community programs, including the Daddy and Me Program at the Ontario Early Years Centre-Nipissing. The facilitator comes to our final class of Fathers Matter to share information on the Daddy and Me program and this gives the dads a familiar face to be comfortable with.

Daddy and Me gives kids a chance to spend time with their dad, or that

special someone in their life. It is about, making kids and dads appreciate each other. Kids may grow out of their toys, but they never forget the quality time they spend with their dads.

North Eastern Region, Nipissing,
Community Living ~
[Ontario Early Years Web Site](#)

**What Dads have to say
about these programs:**

"It was a great course and a great place to meet other dads. This course helped me refocus my priorities to be a great dad again."

"It gave me a day to myself, and a better outlook and much appreciation as a single father, and it helped me with questions. I had an amazing experience..."

In This Issue

| | |
|---|--------|
| Parent Programs for Fathers in the Nipissing District..... | Page 1 |
| Father Experiences Benefits of OEYC in Kincardine..... | Page 2 |
| Connecting Men with their Children in Etobicoke Lakeshore, Toronto..... | Page 3 |

Stay-at-home father expresses gratitude for OEYC in Kincardine

How has the OEYC in Kincardine benefited my family? First and foremost, they were a readily available source of social activities for my children. My wife, Jody, works full-time and I am a full-time, stay-at-home Dad. Back in 2007 our family experienced what could only be described as a miraculous year when we went from one child to four children. Our two beautiful, adopted daughters, Hope and Grace, joined older brother James, and then our second son, Joshua, was born. Our household went from fairly calm and serene, to a frantic and a chaotic free for all.

“Our first visit really set the tone for what we came to expect from the excellent staff...they directly engaged my kids.”

We learned about Kincardine OEYC and thought that the program sounded exactly like what we needed. Our first visit really set the tone for what we came to expect from the excellent staff. Upon arrival, Carolyn and Angela greeted us and immediately engaged my kids.

Did You Know?

Relationships that foster healthy attachments play a critical role in a child's development. A father figure's love has been found to be related to a child's short and long-term psychological well-being and health.

“One dramatically important component of the concept quality of relationship has to do with warmth, supportiveness, comforting, caring, nurturance, affection, or simply love.” (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001)

They made sure my girls knew that they could do – crafts, play with toys, or participate in the activities at the group – and they were very caring and loving with the kids. They also played with Joshua, who was still a little baby, when I wanted to spend time with my daughters. Words cannot describe how welcome they made my family feel on that first visit.

From there on, the enjoyment that my children and I took from our time at the OEYC just continued to grow. We did our best to get out to playgroup every Monday and Friday morning. The kids loved it. Even our eldest son, James, wanted to come out and experience all the fun that his little sisters had been telling him about.

I also learned about support groups that were being offered, as well as developmental milestones to watch for as my children grew. I was kept informed about programs such as story stretchers, visits from the public health nurse, speech therapists and special events for young families – things I wouldn't have known had it not been for the OEYC. We also took advantage of programs that helped to get our kids ready to start school.

Most of all, I learned that there was a safe, warm, welcoming place in Kincardine where I could take my children, and let them be kids with other kids. The OEYC staff have become just like family.

South West Region, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound:
Walkerton, Kincardine Site ~
[Ontario Early Years Web Site](#)

Etobicoke Lakeshore OEYC shares tips on how to engage dads

The OEYC at the Lakeshore Area Multi-service Project (LAMP) in Toronto has been running programs for fathers since 2002. Here are some things they have learned through the years.

Be intentional and purposeful about engaging fathers. For example, the LAMP OEYC's mission statement for fathering is to "build deeper connections with the next generations". Every program opportunity passes through this statement.

Commit to either a dads-only program or working to be more father-friendly. Having a dads-only program allows the men to care for their children without mom being there to step in, which can so easily happen. It also gives them the opportunity for "guy talk" about fathering. They can more easily share their stories and support each other with ideas. Some centres choose to work on making their environment more father-friendly by putting up posters, promoting resources for dads, and intentionally including them in conversations.



Keep them active. In your planning, provide things for dads to do together with their children. Even though men do talk when they are in groups, they enjoy spending active, quality time with their children. Parachute games, appropriate sports activities, small tricycles and bikes, balls, and building projects are just some ideas.

***You can see more at
www.dadstoday.org***

Stay connected. We do this through email because we learned early on that if reminder emails were not sent, guys didn't think about coming to the drop in.

Keep the email short – no more than three to four lines.

Have multiple opt-ins. Look for different options for dads such as running weekend or evening drop-in times, offering parenting groups for dads, and providing helpful information in your centre or via email. Some of these ideas are more time-intensive than others. Ask the dads what would work best for them.

Most importantly, provide resources that dads can relate to, feed them and let them have fun!

Toronto, Etobicoke Lakeshore, LAMP ~
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