



BridgeWay

Summer 2015 Newsletter



Caring every day, building stronger families

BridgeWay Family Centre

Welcome to BridgeWay Family Centre. We are so pleased to be able to share with you our new name and new look. After serving the communities of Peel for many years as Mississauga Parent-Child Resource Centres, we simply outgrew our name. So we embarked on a name change project and after consultation with our staff and board we decided that BridgeWay speaks to what we do.

BridgeWay Family Centre connects families to programs and services; providing them with opportunities to grow as parents and as a family. Our centres are a place to build friendships; where families

connect with each other. We provide the link to services in the community, bridging the gap for many families to the support that they need.

The new name was endorsed by our members at our recent AGM so now we will begin the legal process to make it official.

Our services remain the same and our commitment to you remains the same. Through our pre and postnatal programs, our infant, toddler and preschool programs and our parent education programs, referrals and services we look forward to many years of serving you as BridgeWay Family Centre.

We are the bridge to building stronger families.

Important Dates to Remember:

All locations are closed for September 5, 7, 23 (evening only), 24, 25, October 10, 12, December 24 (half day), 25, 26, 31 (half day) and January 1.

FAMILY FRIENDLY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

As a family it can be challenging to find ways to enjoy physical activity together. There can be a variety of prohibitive factors—time and cost are probably on the top of your list. Screen time can be an easy solution to keeping your child busy but it is a passive activity that doesn't engage them physically. Being active as a family can be as easy as walking out your front door. A game of chase with your little ones will teach them how to move quickly and adapt their movements to their surroundings. Bring a ball with you to throw and kick to help build their coordination. Even a simple walk around the block can be fun when you add a challenge like finding sticks, looking for letters and numbers or counting how many cars go by. Bring a pair of binoculars (aka two toilet paper tubes stuck together) and play I Spy or go birdwatching next time you go out. When you are physically active with your children you are supporting their overall growth and development. You are role modelling the importance

of fitness and connecting with each other.

There are also many parks, beaches and trails near by that can present new and interesting options. Navigating a rock covered beach is much more difficult than strolling along a board walk. Climbing over tree stumps and along an embankment not only engages a variety of muscle groups but also brings your family closer to nature. Don't let the weather stop you either—who knows what new discoveries are to be made on a rainy day?

Whatever you choose to do as a family remember that being active together now has positive impact on everyone's long-term health—physically, socially and emotionally.

Discover some new places to go here:

<http://walkandrollpeel.ca/map/themap.asp>

What is ready for school?

What does it mean to be ready for school? It's a question that gets asked a lot, in particular by parents of 3 and 4 year olds. If you have a child that is four or turning four before December 31, chances are you have asked yourself if your child is 'ready' to start school. But what does that really mean? Does it mean that they can read and write? Does it mean that they can count to 100? Not really. Being ready for school means that your child is ready to learn, it means that they are ready to learn *how* to read, ready to learn *how* to write and *how* to count. So, if being ready for school means being ready to learn, what does *being ready to learn mean*?

When a child is ready to learn they have the self help skills that are needed to help them cope with day to day tasks independently. For example, when a child arrives at school they follow a routine—they take off their jacket and hang it up, change their shoes and probably sit down for circle time. It may not seem like much to us, but a lot has happened in those first few moments of school.

In those first few minutes of school your child will have used their visual recognition skills to find their space—maybe they recognized their name or part of it, maybe they remembered their hook because it is near the door or maybe they have their picture in their spot. All of those are possible and what made your child successful in that task was

that when you played with your child you talked with them about letters and symbols, when you went for a walk you pointed out landmarks and you helped them become self-aware when you looked in the mirror together.

Then, when your child takes off their jacket they used their fine motor skills and eye hand coordination to undo the zipper or buttons. They know how to do this because you helped them to strengthen those small muscles in their hands when you played with playdough or used crayons. When you made that bead necklace together you helped them use their finger tips to string the bead and you helped make sure they saw the tip of the string every time. That repetition made sure the muscles remembered how to do it the next time. You encouraged them to try; you were positive and supportive and they felt empowered.

When your child changes their shoes they use their coordination and gross motor skills, and they know how to seek help when they can't quite fit their foot in. Shoes are really tricky things for kids; it takes core strength to be able to bend over, keep your balance, move your leg in the right direction and still hold the shoe at the right angle to get your foot in or out of it. You have to make adjustments along the way and it changes based on what you are wearing and what kind of shoes you have that day. You helped your child do this by playing in the park and getting exercise to build their strength and coordination. You gave them time and space to run, jump, climb and roll around. When they fell you comforted them, you

showed them that it is ok to seek help, recover and try again.

After all of that work your child will sit down and join the group. Your child knows how to do this because you have sat together to read stories; probably just a few short ones at a time and then as they got older some longer ones. They learned to increase their attention span and to focus on the story and tune out what is happening around them. When you brought them to the centre they learned about interacting with other children and working together as a group and conversations with your child taught them that people take turns.

A lot of learning happens before your child ever gets to school and you are your child's first teacher. You may not have realized it but you were getting your child ready for school when they were a baby. Because you gave your child those skills (and so many more) when they arrive at school they will be ready to learn. The teachers in the classroom can spend more time working on the ABC's and 123's because your child has self help skills, confidence and independence. You have done a great job as a parent, teaching them what they need to know in order to be successful at school. Well done!



NUMBERS—YECH! BY: SARA STEWART

I am not a numbers person. I have struggled with simple math equations my whole life. I have had math tutors, taken summer school for math and barely squeaked out a passing grade. I never thought they were interesting. I am, however, a reader. As a child I read books voraciously (being a parent has made that harder to do now); I even majored in English Literature in university. Yet lately, I have been finding numbers more and more intriguing. Lately, I have discovered that numbers actually have a story to tell. Who knew?

Over the past few years at this agency I have had the opportunity to learn about statistics and their role within our organization and this is what I have recently learned.

Last year our agency had over 198,000 visits. That means that clients have visited us for a program or service almost 200,000 in one year. That's an average of 692 visits a day!

And that's just one of the numbers that I found interesting. For example, how about the number 445? On its own it really isn't that significant, but when I tell you that 445 is the number of new mothers that were seen in our Healthy Start and Teen Prenatal Supper Club last year then that number has importance and meaning. Last year 445 pregnant or new mothers meeting the program criteria, received pre and postnatal education, they received food vouchers to provide healthy food for themselves and their family, they learned about healthy, cost-conscious meal choices, they received support from public health nurses, social workers and dietitians. Consequently, 448 represents the number new babies that will have a better start in life because of our programs. That is quite a story.

Another number that tells a story is 8673. Again, on its own it doesn't have much to say, but when it is paired with 'volunteer hours' WOW! Last year people in our communities donated 8673 hours of volunteer time. They have helped in program preparation and delivery, they have sat on our Board, they have played and interacted with children, they have given so much to us and we have learned so much from them. Saying thank you 8673 times would barely cover how much we appreciate their time.

Those are just a few of the numbers that I have found interesting this past year, and I am sure that there are many more. Hmm, I wonder if it is possible for this English major, with an ECE certificate and an aversion to numbers to learn more about our agency finances? Maybe next issue.

ONLINE RESOURCES

PMD in Peel

"One in five women will experience a mood disorder during pregnancy or after the birth or adoption of a child." PMD in Peel provides information and resources for parents experiencing a postpartum mood disorder.

<http://www.pmdinpeel.ca/>

abc123

This Ministry of Education website provides ideas and information about helping your child get ready for the full day kindergarten program.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng/>

Gift Matching



Our agency relies on grants and donations from our funders and generous community members like you, to run our prenatal, early learning and parenting programs. When you make a donation to BridgeWay Family Centre we urge you to ask your employer about gift matching. Many companies offer their employees the opportunity to match a donation they make to a charitable organization. This means that your donation is doubled or even tripled; increasing the positive impact you will have on families.

A little goes a long way when you use gift matching.

MEET THE CLIENT: MARCO VERGARA

At BridgeWay, every client has a story to tell. They are the reason for what we do and the moment they walk through our doors they become part of a family. Recently Marco shared his story at our Annual General Meeting. He inspired and encouraged all of us to continue strengthening and supporting families. Here is Marco's story.

My name is Marco and I am married to a wonderful woman, Laura. We are blessed to have two beautiful children, Jacob and Thomas, and are currently expecting our third baby. I was born and raised in Colombia until my early twenties when I decided to come to Canada and change the life I knew for the hope of a new future for the generations to come.

I was one of those immigrants that arrived with a hundred dollars in my pocket and a backpack full of dreams hoping to adjust quickly to the endless winters, plurality of beliefs and a language quite difficult to master. I was living in the busy city of Toronto when I married Laura but once we knew that we were expecting we felt like two teenagers who had just left home for the first time without knowing what to do or whom to trust for advice, it seemed like the whole world was starting to spin in a different direction and we weren't prepared nor equipped for this life's challenge.

We decided to move to Mississauga and get away from the noise and craziness of the city into a more family oriented, suburban kind of environment. Clarkson was our new nest and we welcomed our firstborn the winter of 2010. The neighborhood was convenient and soon after we met other moms and made good friends with them.

One day we found out about the Early Years Centre and from that day on Laura and I felt in love with it. We were greeted by wonderful people, our kids had a place to make other friends, and moms and dads had the opportunity to share experiences and to relate to each other. We had so many questions that finally got answered and not just that, we had that sense of community that seemed lost since we left home.

Laura and I love people, we serve at church and we are always engaged with friends and families. We had such inspiration from the Early Years Centre that we started telling everyone we knew and then we began to think about how to make our lives around the Centre and be able to support it and keep that connection. Precious World Kids Store was the result of that.

We opened a resale kids clothing, toys and accessories boutique just a few doors away from the Early Years Centre, we buy new and used items mainly from moms that come to the Centre. We keep counting the new babies that are born and introduce new moms, almost every month, to know the privileges of the Centre and invite them to enjoy the benefits of its classes and services. We have seen many of the kids grow and go to school for the first time and we are so glad to have the opportunity to see our own kids nurturing memories that will hold them still as they grow.

Having kids is challenging but it is extremely important, they are the future of our country, they are those dreams we had that became real; they are the nucleus of our community and the Early Years Centres are fundamental throughout this process. The Centres provide the support families need during the upbringing of their kids, they bring the community together and they inspire individuals like us.

We need to support them financially and personally and, they complement the structure of our society and we need to make sure they exist in every neighborhood. As long as we have children we will be a voice of support and encouragement, we will keep spreading the word and we will be always thankful for the impact it created on us in such a time like this.



thank you!

The work that we do in our centres and programs would not be possible without the generous support of our partners. Their contributions of time, space and in kind donations assist families throughout Peel to grow, learn and become stronger. If you are interested in strengthening and supporting families in Peel please contact us at info@mpcrc.ca.