



A WINTER WONDERLAND

Playing out-of-doors during winter has numerous benefits for children

Winter is just around the corner, and many of us are already worrying about snow tires and parkas. But our children are excited. They aren't thinking about frozen car windows: they are thinking about snow angels and ice skating.

When it's warm, we love to send our children outside to play because we know it's good for them. But when the weather dips, we often dig in our heels.

"People often look for an excuse not to go outside, but we are always looking for a reason to go outdoors," says Lianne Terry, Acting Assistant Program Manager for York and Toronto. "At Family Day, we encourage outdoor play and learning in almost all weather. This may mean adjusting the time of day we go out, or

shortening the amount of time we are outdoors, but the goal is to be outdoors, every day."

So instead of fretting about the wind chill factor, let's look at some of the many benefits the cold weather has on children's well-being.

A Healthy Immune System

Keeping kids out of the cold will generally *not* keep them healthier. While it is impossible to protect children from *all* viruses or bacteria in winter, allowing children to naturally come into contact with some of them can actually make them less likely to develop autoimmune disorders and allergies, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

The CDC notes that getting outside also strengthens children's immune systems by allowing them an escape from indoor germs and bacteria.

Getting Good Exercise

The winter months provide children with different ways to move their bodies, when they do things like ski, sled, or walk up a snowy hill. According to "*Bundle Up and Get Outside*" by Caileigh Flannigan, children's larger muscles are put to great use in the winter months due to the challenges that snow provides. This large-muscle use and increase in physical activity supports children's gross motor development and overall health.

Lesley Pettigrew, Supervisor of Family Day's Thornhill Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC), runs various family programs, including a winter "Nature and Me" program. She says the benefits for children are many, from helping to promote relaxation and soothe nerves to helping improve concentration and promote better sleep.

"The challenge during the winter — or anytime there is inclement weather — is to get families to commit to coming out to the program," says Pettigrew. "So, we have implemented an orientation session at the beginning of the program, and we discuss the ways to dress for the weather, and the benefits of going outside." (See "*Dressing for Outdoor Success*" on page 3).



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Problem-Solving Skills

Winter also presents new physical and cognitive challenges for children to overcome. Flanigan says toys and equipment (such as swing sets) that were once readily available may now be frozen or covered in snow. This forces children to use their imaginations to find alternatives.

The winter season provides new environments and materials, which give children new tasks (for example sliding down an ice patch or climbing a snow hill). Engagement with outdoor environments in the winter incites new problem-solving skills, for instance: “How can I slide down this ice patch without falling?” “How fast can I run up this snow hill?”

Vitamin D Exposure

Sun exposure, even in cold weather, is an important source of Vitamin D, especially for children, since few foods contain it naturally. So keeping children indoors during winter means they miss out.



The amount of sunlight children are exposed to and the amount of Vitamin D they absorb can have a large impact on their mood. According to the National Institute of Health, Vitamin D promotes calcium absorption, prevents rickets in children, and prevents bones from becoming too thin or brittle.

Attitude Shift

It's important not to let our own worries about safety or illnesses prevent our children from accessing play during the winter months. So, let's try to shift our focus to the importance of outdoor play on children's well-being.

Family Day has safe and healthy activities planned for your young ones this winter — everything from building snow castles and making snow patterns to playing hockey and exploring nature. So, it's time to bundle the kids up — and let young imaginations soar.

Message from
Joan Arruda, CEO



Join Our Board Of Directors

As a registered charity operating in Ontario, Family Day is governed by a volunteer board of directors. I rely on this board to provide input and guidance, and to oversee the broader strategy of the agency's programs and services. Our board members are recruited from a variety of professions, from finance and law to human resources and early learning and care.

We are currently recruiting new board members with various skill sets through an application and nomination process, and I would like to reach out to our parent community for representation. We are looking for people who use any Family Day service and who are interested in volunteering their time, knowledge and expertise.

The Family Day board meets 10 times each year, on the last Wednesday of the month in Toronto. We offer board members an orientation, Directors' and Officers' Liability insurance, and membership in the Institute of Corporate Directors.

As busy parents with young children we recognize you have many priorities competing for your time and focus; adding one more obligation is likely a challenge. However, your voice matters at the board level to keep our conversations grounded in the needs of children and families. I encourage you to consider this opportunity and look forward to hearing from you.

If you are interested in being considered for a seat on our board, please email jarruda@familydaycare.com, contact the site supervisor at your program, or speak to your staff contact for the agency.

Cheers, Joan

Dressing For Outdoor Success

Donning the appropriate clothing can make a big difference in how much children enjoy the winter months. Here are some tips on dressing children properly for the season ahead:

Base Layer: The key to staying warm is proper layering (typically, three layers). The base layer is all about wicking moisture and keeping it away from the skin. Avoid cotton because it absorbs perspiration, and don't make layers too tight.

Mid Layer: This layer is all about warmth, insulating and trapping heat close to your body. Fibres like wool and down and fleece are great choices.

Top Layer: Think of this layer as your shield against wind, rain and snow. Jackets and pants should be made of wind- and rain-proof fabric like Gore-Tex or Nylon.

Head Protection: Select hats that are warm, lightweight, and cover the ears. Wool and fleece are both good choices. Hats with Velcro chin straps are warmer and safer than draw strings for smaller kids.

Neck Protection: A scarf can turn into a hazard for kids, so a neck warmer is a much better choice. You can also go for an all-in-one balaclava.

Hands: For younger kids, weatherproof, insulated mittens are the way to go, but aim for pairs with cinches at the wrist and elongated cuffs.

Socks: Your best weapon against cold feet and toes is to keep them dry. Smartwool, fleece or other synthetics are all great choices.

Snow Boots: Make sure boots are insulated, have rubberized soles and are weatherproof. Ensure the boots are roomy enough to allow a child to wear bulky socks.

Source: Wilderchild.com



Megan Mitchell (L) and Joan Arruda (R)

AGM Focuses On Sustaining Innovation

More than 100 Family Day staff and sector partners gathered at Thornhill's Le Parc on September 27 for our 2017 AGM. The event included presentations by Jim Grieve of The Retired Teachers of Ontario and Megan Mitchell of the Schulich School of Business. Mitchell, a dynamic speaker, consultant and educator, gave the evening's keynote address, entitled "Sustaining a Culture of Innovation."



Five New Centres Get Storypark

We are pleased to welcome five more centres to our Storypark community: Our Lady of Providence, St. Herbert, Bayview Hill, Armadale, and St. Sylvester. The new sites received hands-on training from Drew Williams of Storypark. In addition, staff members who are already well-versed in Storypark have offered to support the new adopters as they begin to use this educational tool.

Get Ready To Roll

Dust off your bowling shoes and get ready for the seventh annual Bowling for Family Day. Next year's event will take place on Saturday, April 21, 2018 at two locations: Markham Bowl and Brunswick Zone Bramalea. Stay tuned for more information in the months to come.



Family Day Celebrates Staff

While Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day should be every day, it was officially celebrated province-wide (and throughout Family Day) on October 25, 2017. Family Day is extremely proud of our staff and the real difference they make in the lives of children and their families.



Climbing For A Cause

In the early hours of Sunday, November 5, several Family Day employees "skipped the elevator" and climbed the CN Tower's 1,776 steps for the United Way. Hats off to all of those who braved the steep climb and raised money for a worthy cause.



FAMILY DAY

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FOCUS Newsletter

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Toronto & York Region

For countless families, Family Day is the only way!