



**FAMILY  
DAY**

***Family Day Care Services 2019-2020 Annual Report***  
***September 2020***



***Ongoing Innovation  
and Conversation***



FAMILY  
DAY



#### OUR VISION

***A society where all children  
achieve their potential***

#### OUR MISSION

***Leading innovation in early  
learning, child care and  
family support services***

#### OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIVES

- 1. Driving Innovation***
- 2. Attracting Innovators***
- 3. Enabling Innovation***



# BOARD CHAIR AND CEO REPORT

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

2020 will be the year that many of us will not forget any time soon; COVID-19 has changed the world as we know it, and no one really knows what our new “normal” will be tomorrow. Our fiscal year ended on March 31, 2020, just as COVID-19 began to spread its global tentacles.

As a sector leader, Family Day is invested in evidence-based practices that promote excellence in early learning for young children. Family engagement plays a key role in this goal. This past year, a special research project on family engagement was undertaken through the Family Day Innovation Centre. The research included a series of focus groups with families to hear their perspectives, observations and recommendations. Opportunities for family engagement are also being leveraged on our Storypark online platform, through educator and parent documentation of children’s learning and experiences. The introduction of two pedagogical peer mentor positions has also been a great innovative opportunity for the organization. We are delighted that we have skilled and dedicated frontline staff members who have successfully taken on these roles.

Diane’s first year as CEO of Family Day has gone by quickly, and the Board is exceedingly pleased with how Diane has taken on her new role and guided the organization with her own intelligent, thoughtful and caring leadership style. As the agency continues to move forward strategically, we sincerely appreciate the strong commitment, collaborative work and opportunities with government and community partners. We want to recognize our management team, staff members, caregivers, students, and volunteers. Our strong and respected reputation is the result of their hard work and dedication. We also want to acknowledge our dedicated Board of Directors for their strong leadership.

Thank you to everyone for your contributions to making a difference in the lives of children and their families.



**Louis Gambino**  
Board Chair



**Diane Daley**  
Chief Executive Officer



### **FAMILY DAY BOARD AND MANAGEMENT**

(as of March 31, 2020)

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Louis Gambino (Chair) • Jackie Chavarie (1st Vice Chair)  
Michael Braithwaite (2nd Vice Chair) • Joe Cacioppo (Secretary and Treasurer)  
David Mousavi (Past Chair)  
Directors: Tracy Abel, Melissa Banfield, Maura Dyer, Joshua Fineblit,  
Chaya Kulkarni, Martha Lee-Blickstead, Dupe Oluyomi-Obasi, Sathees Ratnam

#### **SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM**

Diane Daley, Chief Executive Officer (Effective July 1, 2019)  
Joan Arruda, Outgoing Chief Executive Officer  
Mary Sharifzadeh, Associate Director, Programs

#### **MANAGEMENT TEAM**

Shelagh Karstoff, Frances Lesick, Nicole Lewis, MaryLou Maher, Pat McDowell,  
Elly Morshedi, Nira Ponniah, Violet Robinson, Lisa Shortall, Lianne Terry,  
Christine Verzini, Mollie Zebedee

# Family Day By the Numbers

April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020

## PROGRAMS



## TRAINING STATISTICS



Number of  
Training  
Opportunities



Number of  
Hours



Unique  
Numbers



Cumulative  
Numbers

# HUMAN RESOURCES



391 Full Time Staff



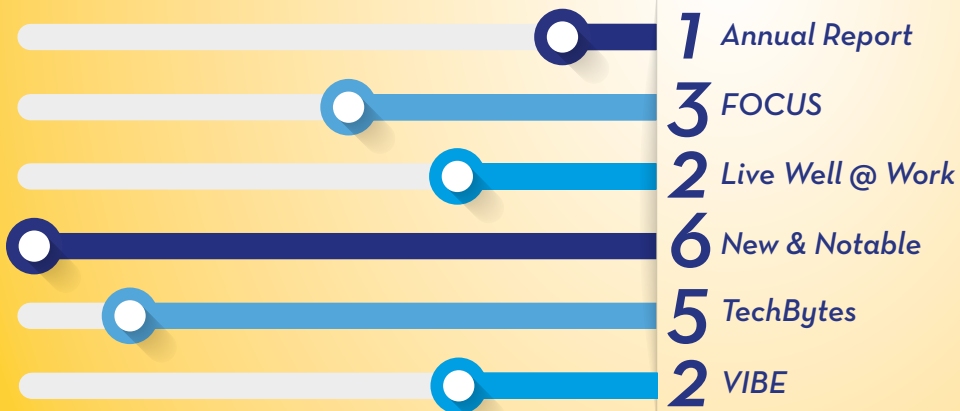
304 Part Time Staff



150 Casual Staff



## COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING



### 560 FACEBOOK POSTS

Facebook users increased by 34%  
(we have 1,546 followers)

### 669 TWITTER POSTS

Twitter users increased by 18%  
(we have 985 followers)

### 8 WEBSITE POSTS

From CEO / Messages / News



*Engaging families to support children's learning is central to promoting healthy child development. We have captured some stories across several Family Day programs that reflect our commitment to family engagement. We are delighted to share these positive stories, examples that demonstrate the impact of the work we do each day.*



# Parent engagement promotes child's language development

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If you have a question about dinosaurs or sea creatures, if there's anything – *anything at all* – that you want to know, then Marcus is your go-to expert. He will excitedly talk your ear off about all things dinosaur, give you the names of all sorts of ancient creatures or things that live in the deep ocean. But before you start looking at directories of university professors for this paleontologist-slash-marine-mammologist, we should probably tell you that he just turned five.

Marcus might be a chatterbox now, but two-and-a-half years ago, when he first started attending a home child care program, Marcus would barely say anything. "He had trouble regulating his emotions, and would shout, cry, and be aggressive due to his difficulty communicating," Munazza, one of Family Day's Integration Coordinators, said.

Family Day supports children with special needs. Christine, Marcus' mother, remembers how she was first introduced to Munazza through the "Every Child Belongs" program saying, "the home child care provider recognized that Marcus had a speech delay and had her coordinator recommend one of Family Day's Integration Coordinators" she says. "I made the decision to contact her."

To ensure that all children and their families are supported in Family Day's home child care program, Munazza not only works with home child care providers directly, she also introduces parents to resources they may need. It's a true partnership between the child care providers, the parents, and other specialists. The role is essential, Munazza says, because the system can be difficult to navigate for parents who are often overwhelmed with information about their child's well-being and development. "Some of this information is inauthentic, insofar as it might not be appropriately helpful in their particular situation, or it may not reflect best practices," she explains.

Even when the information is good, it can be difficult to understand exactly what it means. For example, a report may identify "labelling" as a strategy. Parents who are unaccustomed to the phrase may think that they need to label each object. "No," Munazza says, "it means that if a child is holding a pen, you say 'pen' and leave it at that."

When Munazza first met Christine and Marcus, it was initially to offer access to resources that would help Marcus work through his delayed speech. "Speech isn't just words," Munazza explained. "It's communication overall, like pointing with your finger, or maintaining eye contact." She went

on to develop more in-depth strategies for Christine and Marcus' home child care provider to use.

For example, she coached Marcus on how to communicate that he was hungry. Marcus would lead his child care provider to the fridge, and once there, the provider would ask him to point at what he wanted. If he wanted milk, she would say 'milk' while giving it to him. This helped Marcus associate a specific word with a specific object.

Another strategy Munazza used was making a visual schedule for Marcus. Using a picture schedule helps bring focus, structure, and predictability to a child's daily routine. The home child care provider was able to tell Marcus that it was almost time for the next activity while pointing to it on the schedule.

The schedule not only helped Marcus prepare himself for the transition between activities; it also encouraged experimenting with different kinds of play. For example, although Marcus had problems with playing with Play-Doh because he didn't like the texture of the material, he was able to participate in the activity with other children by mixing in other things – *things with textures that Marcus liked* – and then taking a photo of this and including the photo in his schedule.



### INCLUDING CHILDREN

This dislike of certain activities — *and learning how to work around them* — is not a ‘Marcus thing,’ Munazza points out. “Some kids don’t like finger painting, but some kids will use sponges or brushes to participate in the activity.” Child care providers should seek to include children in all activities, which means finding adaptive means of having them participate.

All of these and other strategies have made a world of difference to Marcus. When she first met him, Munazza remembers that there was a lot of crying, and not much communicating, either with words or pointing. Over time, though, Munazza noticed positive changes. His home child care provider was able to better discern his needs and work with Munazza to develop strategies to encourage participation, cooperation with other children, and self-regulation of his emotions.

Today, Marcus regularly uses three- or four-word sentences to express his needs, and Christine says that he often makes observations about the world around him. “He told me the other day that chicken nuggets are a kind of chicken,” Christine laughed delightedly. She has also noticed that Marcus has been a lot less aggressive now that he can use words to articulate his wants and needs. “He’s even sharing with his little brother!”

## Schedule Success

One key strategy that was useful to Marcus was using a visual schedule to establish a routine. Christine used a similar schedule right inside the door for Marcus to use as soon as he gets home. The schedule has three pictures reminding him to take off his shoes and put away his coat and school bag.

Developing a visual schedule is a useful way for all children to learn a specific routine around a specific activity, such as getting ready for school or eating dinner, or by helping children prepare for a new set of activities. Here are some quick tips to make your own schedule.

#### 1. Keep it simple

Having a small number of steps will help children adjust to and internalize the routine.

#### 2. Find a balance between words and pictures

Some children will want more in-depth explanations of what to do, and pictures will suffice for others.

#### 3. Have it visible

Having the schedule in a designated spot will help children understand where to look for instructions.

#### 4. Change it up!

A schedule can also show children specific goals or tasks that they will be accomplishing that day or week, allowing them to prepare ahead of time for new activities or challenges.





## Open Doors – Integrating opportunities for outdoor learning

*Both our staff and families embrace an outdoor learning journey*

“I live 250 metres from Yonge Street,” Carrie says with delight. “It’s all right there!”

The “all” this parent is referring to is a natural playground: creeks, forests, trails, parks; places to take children to walk, run, and explore. Carrie is a strong believer in outdoor play, and therefore was tremendously excited to learn about Family Day’s outdoor program, a quarterly play-and-education session that helps parents understand how to integrate outdoor exploration in their everyday slate of activities.

One of the program facilitators, Margaret, had glowing words to say about Carrie. “She attended every session. She is very much interested in the program and is very open-minded.”

The program is an exercise in free play that helps parents explore different outdoor play opportunities in each season. Program facilitators prepare a series of materials for both children and parents and encourage using imagination while playing. The materials vary wildly, and may include arts and crafts, sensory-focused activities, blocks, and music areas. The goal is to have children move around the space and follow where their interests take them.

Or, as Margaret put it perfectly, “We make the environment happen.”

Parents are encouraged to visit the program at least four times each year, once every season. The program is crafted to highlight the way nature changes, to spark observations and curiosity in children, as well as to help parents recognize unique learning opportunities in summer, fall, winter, and spring.

Carrie says that her positive reception to the program comes from her own life experiences. She thinks that children today take nature too much for granted. “When I was a kid, we didn’t have all this tech,” she explains. “We had outside.”

While technology absolutely has its place in early childhood education, Carrie’s oft-repeated words have merit. There are valuable learning opportunities that are greatly augmented by placing them in outdoor space. Margaret points out that the ever-changing landscape of nature helps spur cognitive development in children and general awareness of their surroundings (*especially if they are invited to ask questions and talk about what they observe*).

### FINE MOTOR SKILLS

While many educators are quick to highlight the development of gross motor skills – *actions that use the large muscles in the torso, arms and legs such as running, climbing, jumping, and crawling* – Margaret points out that the outdoors is an excellent place to develop fine motor skills as well. Activities that focus on collecting leaves, flowers, or other bits of nature, and then using the found materials to decorate hats, for example, all help refine small and delicate movements that are not usually associated with outdoor play.

In addition to this special registered program, offered at Thornhill’s EarlyON, Margaret also integrates outdoor play into her everyday programming. At first, she saw outdoor play as an extension of indoor, classroom programming, “Like ‘*painted snow*’, but without the mess.” Indoor concepts were taken outdoors, such as identifying shapes while going on walks, or using sidewalk chalk to make pictures instead of paint and paper.

Her perception of outdoor play changed, and she saw it as an entirely new set of opportunities to explore. Margaret started to bring the outdoors into the classroom: she started with

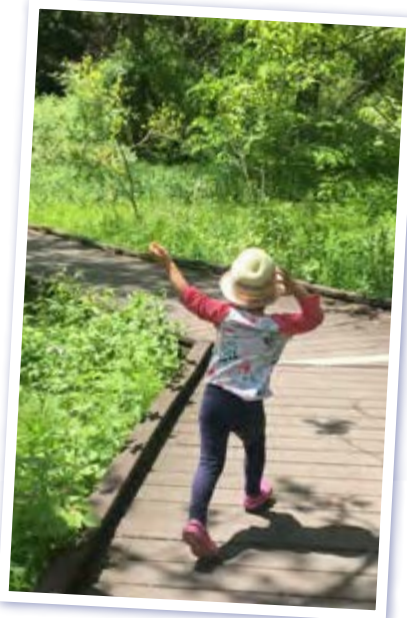




## OPEN DOORS

### FAMILY DAY OUTDOOR LEARNING ADVENTURES

*As you can see, Open Doors 2019 was a spectacular success with double the attendance of the previous year's event. Over 500 caregivers, staff, board members, children and their parents loved participating in the many outdoor activities.*



integrating outdoor materials into different art projects to hang on the walls. Then, she built a nature corner in the classroom, filling it with different leaves, flowers, sticks, and other natural knickknacks. Even the kitchen play area became naturalized when the plastic fruits were replaced by pinecones and leaves.

#### MORE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

At the same time, the program's outdoor space was developed to offer more learning and play opportunities for children. Tires were added to the playground, creating a new landscape to jump off and interact with, and an herb garden was started to help children better understand how plants grow and where their food comes from.

All these opportunities have greatly inspired Carrie's four-year-old daughter, Ava (pictured above). Carrie says that consistent outdoor play has shaped Ava's interests and personality. Outdoor play has piqued the preschooler's interest in science and the 'Circle of Life.' She plants tomatoes and is excited to eat the fruits of her labour. At the end of the day, outdoor play has infused Ava with a sense of adventure and curiosity that we want to see in all children.





## *Parents and educators capture children's learning and experiences through Storypark*

When it comes to early childhood learning and development, evidence-based practice has identified that parents who become involved and invested in their child's education are helping to ensure that their children will succeed in school and beyond. This makes sense: children are in a process of constant learning and growth.

Storypark is an online platform that allows for authentic, seamless, engagement between parents and educators. It provides an opportunity to document children's learning. Through photos, videos, and text posts, educators can keep parents up to date on their child's activities, while parents can provide valuable feedback and context to their child's actions.

Families also have an opportunity to comment and share stories, too.

"Storypark has allowed Family Day's educators to document the entire learning experience," explains Nareesa, a registered early childhood educator at the St. Maria Goretti site in Brampton, and Linda, Family Day's pedagogical consultant. To them, the benefits of Storypark are clear:



the learning journey is captured, and clear documentation is maintained.

“It connects people,” they explain. “We have captured so many amazing moments” that parents can now witness and be a part of.

### KEEPING PARENTS IN THE LOOP

Nareesa shared one example of how Storypark created a valuable communication loop with parents. One child – *who had never gone to any of the sensory tables in the centre* – suddenly went to the sand table unprompted, all on her own. This was an exciting change, but also slightly confusing, as there had been no apparent reason or cause for the sudden interest in the sand table.

Nareesa made a post on Storypark and the child’s parents shone some light on the situation. They had gone to the park earlier that week and their child had been invited to play by other children who were playing in the sand, leading to a new interest and play opportunity.

“The Storybook platform works both ways,” Linda explained. Not only do educators document more, but parents become more intentional and observational in their own interactions with their children. By connecting more with educators, parents become more invested and involved in their children’s learning journeys.

### CREATING A SAFE ONLINE COMMUNITY

A key aspect of Storypark is the ability to safely build a community on the platform. Any user can create a closed group to safely share posts and updates in a smaller circle. This allows educators to give more specific, personal updates, while allowing parents and their children to connect with friends.

Storypark has become an especially important communication tool for parents of younger children and

toddlers. Linda noticed that parents of toddlers commented on videos more often than families of older children, which makes sense to her. “Very young children aren’t able to communicate everything they have experienced throughout the day and Storypark provides families with a window into their world when they are not there,” Linda explains. Toddlers and their parents were becoming very invested in the platform because they could watch their friends smile, eat, and play on Storypark.

Storypark has proven itself to be a valuable tool for both parents and educators. For example, Aik has three daughters, each of whom went through Family Day programs. “It gives confidence to parents,” he says about Storypark. He likes that he can follow along with his daughters’ learning journeys and build on their interests at home, especially because one of his daughters has special needs. Because she is not able to verbally communicate what she does at Family Day, Storypark has helped him stay involved in his child’s education. “I can relate to what she likes; I know what activities she likes because I can see her doing them,” he explains.

### SPECIAL BENEFITS

Using Storypark, Aik discovered that his daughter likes building blocks, so he made sure that they were available for her. In an even more significant case, Aik was able to really help his daughter. “She wasn’t eating,” he said. Through using Storypark, he learned that her educators had created a ‘special spot’ for her at the classroom table, which was helping her eat. Aik was able to create a similar special spot at home, which helped her to eat with her family.

This level of communication has created a new level of comfort and enjoyment at the Family Day centre for his daughter. “When we used to drop her off, she used to cry,” Aik says. “And now she doesn’t cry, and she wants to stay.”



## The Research Behind Storypark

**The creators of the Storypark platform may credit their own mothers with their idea to create a communication platform, but they also did their research!**

### Harvard Family Research Project

*“The most accurate predictor of a student’s achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student’s family is able to:*

- 1. Create a home environment that encourages learning.*
- 2. Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children’s achievement and future careers.*
- 3. Become involved in their children’s education at school and in the community.”*

### Outcomes of good practice in transition processes for children entering primary school

*Young children experience transitions from home to service, from service to service, and from service to school. They need as much consistency and continuity of experience as possible in order to develop confidence and trust to explore and to establish a secure foundation of remembered and anticipated people, places, things, and experiences. Recording learning – sharing what is important to your child – eases this transition.*





8TH ANNUAL  
**Bowling for  
Family Day**

**THANK YOU  
TO OUR SPONSORS**

*The agency's eighth  
annual Bowling for Family Day  
fundraiser was a big success.*

*We would like to thank  
the sponsors who help us to  
continue to provide the best  
possible programming to our  
children and their families.*

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**Presenting Sponsor**



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