



Macaulay Today

Helping children succeed—today and in the future

Family Matters



Julian, his mom and home visitor enjoy some play time together.

Macaulay works with families to foster the optimal development of children. And when children have special needs, their families often need extra support.

Kim Sousa knew that something wasn't right when her toddler, Julian, stopped using words he had already learnt. While she waited for a formal assessment, Kim began working with Macaulay family home visitor, Theresa Thomas.

When Julian was diagnosed with autism, Theresa helped Kim to understand what to expect and how to support his development. Kim learned how to prepare her son in advance for new activities, and how to calm him when he got upset.

As a young 19-year-old mother, Kim formed a special bond with her home visitor. Theresa became a critical source of support, encouragement and information. With Theresa, Kim could meet the challenges facing her and Julian.

Julian's grandparents had a harder time accepting what was happening. Kim says, "They said he was slow learning because he was a boy and boys are always behind." So Theresa took the next step and met Julian's grandparents. She talked with them about autism. As Julian played with the television, turning it on and off, Theresa explained that this was an aspect of autism and not simply a boy misbehaving.

Now Julian's grandparents are part of the team helping Julian to develop. Kim says, "Julian has come a long way in just seven months. Now he's in daycare, learning to play with other children and he can say four words together. We're all very proud of him."

Dear Friends of Macaulay,

Thank you for taking some time from this busy period of the year to learn about some of the special things we're doing. With the holiday season upon us, we thought it fitting that this issue focus on the family.

The families highlighted here share a common need for accessible and comprehensive services and supports. They are all working to overcome serious personal or family challenges. Many of them enter Macaulay feeling depressed, angry or overwhelmed. Their stories illustrate our commitment to providing children and families with real support and concrete assistance. This issue also demonstrates our creativity

and experience adapting programs to meet the complex needs of our children and families.

On behalf of the Macaulay Child Development Centre Board and staff, we send you and your loved ones our best wishes for a happy holiday and fulfilling new year.

Sharon Filger
Executive Director

Play it Up!

Filling the wait time with constructive fun

Nearly one in ten preschool children experiences some sort of speech or language delay and families often wait several months for assessment and treatment. That waiting period causes great anxiety for parents who want to address their children's need before it causes larger challenges. That is why Macaulay is proud to be part of a collaboration that targets preschoolers on the waiting list for Toronto Preschool Speech and Language services.

Macaulay's *Play It Up* program helps parents effectively promote their children's speech and language development while they wait for assessment and treatment. Parents learn such strategies as naming, offering choices, listening and slowing down communication to wait for a child's response. Ruth Gayle, a Macaulay early literacy specialist, says, "Parents feel very worried about their child's language and try to teach them words by rote. But studies show that it is more effective to follow the child's interests and to construct activities that motivate them to communicate."

The program also offers children a direct opportunity to play with others and learn how to take part in structured activities like circle time.



Playing it up.

Play It Up doesn't replace formal speech and language services, but it bridges a serious service gap and gives children a positive head start.

Play It Up is an innovative collaboration between Macaulay early literacy specialists, Toronto Preschool Speech and Language Services, and Ontario Early Years Centres. The program is available across Toronto.

The new year brings new initiatives!

Macaulay *Favourite Storyteller* program

In January, this popular program will bring together community dads to engage in early literacy activities and experience the power of stories for young children. While this program helps build literacy leadership skills, its impact extends to enhancing the critically important bond between father and child.

Macaulay Community Symposium

In March, Macaulay will host a symposium to showcase the 30 community literacy leaders who have graduated from the *Favourite Storyteller* program and are now inspiring other parents. Everyone is welcome to participate. If you would like more information, please contact Bixi at blobomolnar@macaulaycentre.org

Don't miss out!

In the new year Macaulay will unveil its new website. To step up our communication we're also going to be emailing from time to time. If you'd like to join our email list for the latest Macaulay happenings and news, please send your first and last names, along with the words 'Sign Me Up' in the subject line, to info@macaulaycentre.org.

When you help mom, you help baby

In order to help children reach their full potential, Macaulay staff sometimes need to start by helping their parents. Family Home Visitor, Oliva Diaz took this approach when she met Erika Acomata, a young widow who lost her husband when she was six months pregnant.

New to Toronto, Erika was deeply depressed and spent most of her day crying after her son Rafael was born. Oliva could see that Erika required support to care for her baby, but she addressed her depression and loneliness first.

As Erika's depression began to lift, Oliva began to teach her how to connect with Rafael and pay attention to his cues. Erika says, "At first, I wasn't paying attention to Raffi and everything was irritating." Oliva also encouraged her to attend programs like *Make the Connection* and *Nobody's Perfect*. Soon Erika was making friends and Raffi



was a different baby. Oliva says, "Erika saw how happy he was and how much he enjoyed the programs. That encouraged her to take him out more and she went to every program I offered." As Erika's confidence grew, Oliva referred her to Macaulay's *Favourite Storyteller* program where she continued to grow as a community leader.

When Raffi turned one, Oliva challenged Erika to make plans for her own future. She helped Erika apply for a child care subsidy and to start school to prepare for her desired career.

Macaulay's holistic approach in working with families helped both Erika and Raffi. Erika says, "Two years ago, my life was zero. Now it's a ten and it's going to be more! I'm very grateful and happy to know that there are programs like Macaulay's."

Photo: Erika and her son, Rafael.



Keenan and Isabella from J.R. Wilcox Public School.

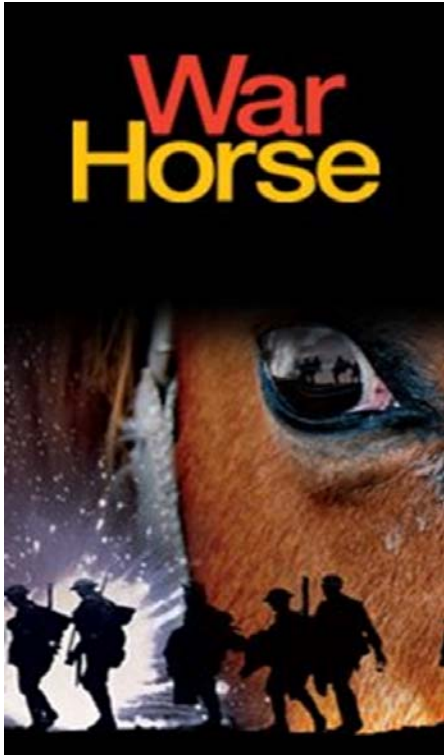
Before and After...

In September, Macaulay welcomed the opportunity to start the *Before and After School* program at J.R. Wilcox Community School. Designed for children in full day kindergarten classes, this new program helps to provide a seamless day for the school's youngest children and continues our strong partnership with the Toronto District School Board.

Thank you to all those who helped make possible this issue of *Macaulay Today*.

Heather Anderson Ross, Angel Chan, Oliva Diaz, Sharon Filger, Ruth Gayle, Paola Guarnieri, Valerie McDonald, Lois Nuk, Theresa Thomas. A very special thank you to the Acomata and Sousa families and the staff and children at J.R. Wilcox's *Before and After* school program.

More than a night out



Coming together in support of our community

Macaulay's Theatre Night is our premiere fundraising event. *War Horse*, a critically acclaimed production, is only one special aspect of the evening. You'll be joining many of our Macaulay friends for an exclusive pre-show reception at the Princess of Wales Theatre. **Most important of all, the funds raised from our Theatre Night will benefit the children and families that rely on Macaulay.**

Macaulay's Theatre Night

Thursday, April 19, 2012

War Horse — Princess of Wales Theatre

Tickets: \$150

(includes premium seating and a charitable tax receipt)

For tickets, contact:

Paola at 416.780.2731 | pguarnieri@macaulaycentre.org

Or visit www.macaulaycentre.org

More ways to give

Theatre Night is not the only way you can make a positive impact within the Macaulay community. Each of us can contribute to help the thousands of children, parents and grandparents that depend on our unique programs. **For this new year, please help make a lasting difference in a child's life and the life of his/her entire family by contributing what you can.**

\$25 provides a healthy snack to a hungry child in our *Homework Club*

\$50 provides a supportive social network to a grandparent caregiver through our *Nonna and Me* program

\$75 helps a father learn critical parenting skills that impact his child's success through our *More than a Haircut* program

\$100 provides an isolated mother of a special needs child essential coping skills in a supportive setting

Please donate online at: www.macaulaycentre.org OR by mail:

The Macaulay Child Development Centre,
2010 Eglinton Ave West,
4th Floor, Toronto ON M6E 2K3

416.789.7441

Donations over \$25 will receive a charitable tax receipt.



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