



The Macaulay  
Child Development  
Centre

# Macaulay Today

Spring 2016

## Dear Friends,

At Macaulay, we recognize that strong families are the cornerstone of our communities and play a critical role in healthy child development.

This edition of Macaulay Today highlights a few of our innovative and responsive parenting services. From established, evidence-based group programs to a brand new “hot off the press” curriculum, Macaulay uses diverse approaches to enrich the parent-child relationship and bolster parents as they face the challenge of raising children in our complex, digital world.

Many of Macaulay families are living on the edge of poverty; their everyday parenting struggles are exacerbated by financial worries, precarious employment and sub-standard housing. Our family support services focus on more than child development and parenting skills. They also teach advocacy skills and empower parents to get the resources their family needs for a better life.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our work and our achievements. We appreciate your interest in us and, as always, welcome your feedback and suggestions.

**Sharon Filger**, *Executive Director*

**43% of Macaulay families are currently living below the poverty line**



## 1 Bounce Back and Thrive

**“There’s a change in how my son and I relate – there’s more mutual respect”**

— **Parent Program Participant**

This fall, 14 Macaulay parents had the opportunity to participate in Bounce Bank and Thrive (BBT), a resilience training program, which they described as “revolutionary”. Over the course of 10 weekly sessions, parents came together in a safe, accepting environment to share and learn new ways of managing their own and their children’s stress. From the Macaulay facilitator: “a community of support formed where parents eagerly awaited each session and actively contributed to the open dialogue. The program provided parents with effective strategies to manage emotions and de-escalate stressful parenting situations. Simple techniques such as deep breathing, rethinking their response, and asking key questions, proved immensely helpful for both the parents and the children.”

Here’s how one parent describes how BBT transformed the way she responds to her child:

“I was at my wit’s end. I would pick up my child from school and he would cry uncontrollably. I couldn’t stop him. I said to myself, what would they tell me to do in BBT?”

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## "The rate of child poverty is the most important indicator of child well-being."

— UNICEF, *Child Poverty in Rich Countries*, 2005

### The negative effects associated with growing up in poverty are well-documented:

- higher risk for poor health
- more likely to have learning difficulties
- more likely to have social and emotional problems
- lower academic achievement

### Here are just some of the ways Macaulay programs mitigate the effects of poverty:

- We give extra support for children to develop the skills they need to succeed, breaking the cycle of poverty in their lifetime.
- We support parents and children to “bounce back”.
- We connect families to resources – food, banks, housing, employment.
- We teach parents to be effective advocates – for themselves and their children.
- We provide high quality child care so parents can participate in the workforce without worry.



## 1 Bounce Back and Thrive

*Continued...*

I put him on my lap and gave him time to talk to me; I needed to show him I care, that I understand his pain. He said “I miss daddy”. Because of the BBT course, I was able to think of a different way to respond. I suggested that he phone his dad and an incredible thing happened. My son stopped crying. He was cheerful the rest of the evening. He even did his homework and helped me in the kitchen. I can’t help but think how easily this situation could have ended in a much different way. I am so grateful for BBT and the Macaulay team for helping me to better understand my child and empathize with him in a way I wasn’t able to before.”

Before attending the program, many of the parents felt frustrated, unable to manage their children’s behaviour and overwhelmed with the stresses of everyday life. They left the program feeling encouraged, accepted and proud. When adults are given opportunities to understand their own emotional reactions and learn different ways of coping, they can become better role models for their children. This gives their children a gift that stays with them throughout life.

## THE BBT PROGRAM

and its companion training for professionals, Reaching In Reaching Out (RIRO), were created by Dr Darlene Kordich Hall and Jennifer Pearson. The training is based on more than 30 years of research by Dr Martin Seligman and colleagues. A major multi-year, cross-Canada evaluation of RIRO and BBT has shown that adults who take the training consistently use the resilience skills in daily life and model them with their children. As a result, adults and children experience:

- ✓ more positive relationships
- ✓ greater calmness and less stress
- ✓ increased confidence & perseverance
- ✓ greater ability to rethink challenging situations
- ✓ a more positive and hopeful outlook

## 2 A Tradition of Responding

**From its very beginning, Macaulay has successfully recognized and responded to new community needs.**

In 1932, that meant opening a day nursery in our founder's home just because children needed a safe place and a meal. In 2016, it means adding a parenting group to a program designed to serve children.

As an agency that offers a full continuum of programs and services, Macaulay is uniquely positioned to effectively respond to urgent needs as they arise.

Here is just one example. Parents of children in our after school program told us they felt overwhelmed, unsure of how to deal with their children's aggressive behaviors,

and plagued with worry over their children's school performance. Macaulay was ready to respond. Working across departments, and with the help of private donations, our after-school program introduced a series of customized parent group sessions that specifically addressed the many challenges these parents identified. The sessions started with a shared meal and were held at times and locations convenient for busy parents. In addition to concrete parenting strategies, participants benefited from a network of support that they can access long after the group is over.



### PARENTS SAY:

"I learned how to recognize when my children were stressed and how to help them."

"I learned so much...including...how to help my kids when they are doing their homework and reading."

"I especially liked that it was easy to understand and that it helps you think."

## 3 Who's your PAL?

Whether registering a child with special needs for kindergarten, accessing recreation programs or finding affordable dental care, many parents struggle to find appropriate support for their families. The result is that children miss out on opportunities and services they need for healthy development. This is especially true for families with barriers due to newcomer status, poverty or literacy issues.

With funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Macaulay designed an advocacy curriculum that brings parents together to learn how to

navigate services and be an effective voice for their children. In addition, Parent Advocacy Leaders (PALs) are recruited and trained to reach out and support other parents.

**The Parent Advocacy Program has already had a powerful effect. It has successfully guided parents to:**

- access stronger income security programs and improved housing
- use the City of Toronto Welcome Policy to register children for sports and recreation programs free of charge
- obtain housing repairs to remove health and safety hazards

- find children's dental care, physical and mental health services
- connect with each other for mutual support such as child-minding
- help organize Macaulay's toy drive for Syrian refugees

Follow this project on Facebook by going to *Parent Advocacy at the Macaulay Child Development Centre*.



## 5 Help Us Reach Our Goal

Our spring campaign is underway. Now more than ever, our kids need your support.

### 100% of your campaign donation will be directed to:

- effective parenting programs that build strong families
- quality after school programming that keep children in high risk neighbourhoods safe and on track for school success

### Please give generously:

- \$25 fills a backpack with school supplies for one student from a low income neighbourhood
- \$75 covers one home visit to a high risk parent to learn about child development and community resources
- \$300 feeds 20 students a nutritious snack at one homework club for one month

To make a donation, please visit our website [www.macaulaycentre.org](http://www.macaulaycentre.org) and press the Donate Now button or mail in your gift to: 2010 Eglinton Avenue West, Suite 400 Toronto, ON M6E 2K3



**United Way**  
Member Agency

## 4 A New Beginning

Maria was a new young mother, essentially homeless, and living temporarily with a relative. She wanted to feel more confident about caring for her baby and she wanted to get her own life on track. It was hard for her to know where to start.

Luckily, she dropped in to her neighbourhood Macaulay Centre. She was not sure what to expect. Mostly she hoped to be accepted without judgment. She got that from Macaulay and more.

Maria learned ways to nurture her baby's development. Her new parenting skills helped build her confidence, and she began to form connections with other parents in the neighbourhood.

Macaulay understood that to truly help Maria, it was important to address the other stressors that were getting in her way.

That is why, over time Macaulay staff were also able to help Maria connect to community housing services, to our teen parenting program, and to the weekly food bank.

Now, with stable housing, increased food security and a support network, Maria is ready to start a search for employment. She and her baby are now both on their way to reaching their potential.



### The Macaulay Child Development Centre

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