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## The Oakville Parent-Child Centre Lunch and Learn Program

By BREN CHISHOLM

Research from the Child Care Education Foundation, says that today it costs Canada \$2.5 billion every year for remedial education because of delayed interventions or early negative experiences. Even more shocking is the fact that work/family conflicts cost businesses another \$4.7 billion a year.

The Oakville Parent-Child Centre is creating a special "Lunch and Learn" program that is making tremendous headway because it is designed with sensitivity to the schedules and requirements of working parents.

"We are happy to be getting the word out to the Halton Community and are very excited about our 'Lunch and Learn' launch which will be held at our Abbeywood location on January 25th, 2005," says Madeleine Buhlau, Special Projects Coordinator at the Oakville Parent-Child Centre.

The curriculum of this program will provide the working parent with affordable support and information on their developing child and it's geared to help parents deal with key "quality of life" issues in a positive, proactive way.

"I will be doing presentations to Halton Service Clubs, BIA's, Chamber of Commerce, etc., in the New Year. I will also visit our own in-house programs to present the initiative as many of our moms may be interested in taking the information back to

their employers when they finish their maternity leave, or pass onto their spouses or take back to their employers if they work part time", says Buhlau.

"Another very important benefit to the 'Lunch and Learn' program will be that revenue raised from course fees will be used to sustain the Oakville Parent-Child Centre's Cozy Reading Program. The Cozy Reading Program sends volunteers to read to small groups of children in Junior and Senior Kindergarten classes, in both the Public and Catholic Halton Schools as well as nursery schools and childcare centres. Its aim is to encourage a love for reading and to teach children that reading is a pleasant and fun activity. Cozy Reading especially benefits children who have had little experience of being read to."

Proactive parent involvement policies and practices need to be put in place within the work environment. Once corporate policy makers make parent involvement and education a priority, their actions and the support systems they provide reflect their commitment. Employers that step up and provide training programs will help cut down on both workplace-related and home-based stresses.

Individuals can contact the Oakville Parent-Child Centre to either pick up a brochure or have one mailed to them. Buhlau believes they are off to a good start. So far, says Buhlau, "the community response has been great!"

For more information on this worthwhile program, please contact the Oakville Parent-Child Centre at 905-825-4011 or email Madeleine Buhla at mbuhlau@bellnet.ca

## Announcement!

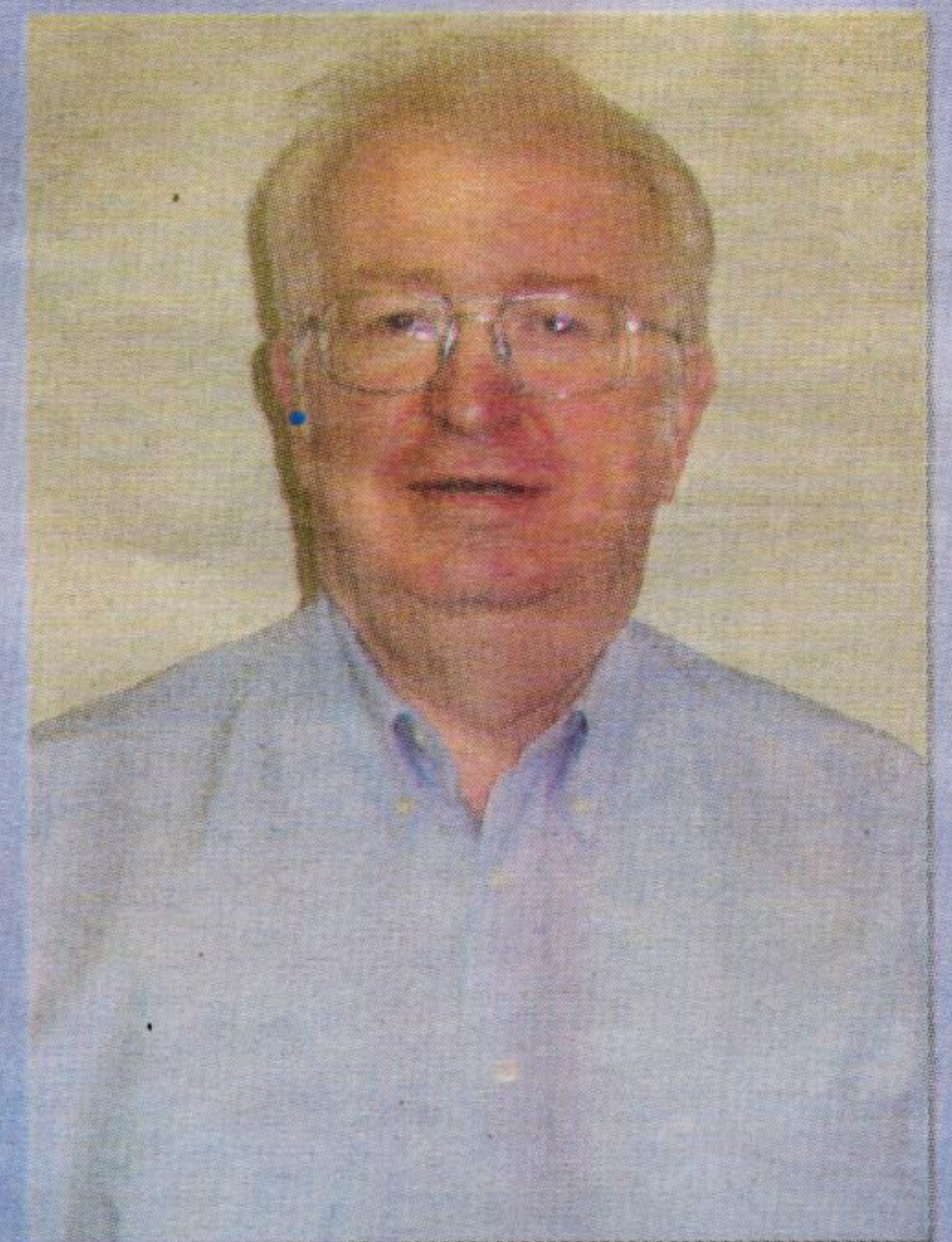
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