

# PlayCentres the thing thanks to grant

by Adrienne Graham Gardner

Young Years Play Centres' are now open in six locations in the area.

Funded by a Young Canada Works grant, these centres offer mothers and their small children an opportunity to get together with others in a relaxed, creative atmosphere.

There are seven local students employed under the \$16,950 grant, which is in effect from the end of May to the end of August. The students involved have widely varied backgrounds, from art to child care, and each contributes in their own way to the success of the project.

Kym Pruesse is the office supervisor, and works out of the house in McGuire Park where the headquarters are located. She will be majoring in psychology at the University of British Columbia in the fall.

Corinne Doan heads the Port McNicoll play centre at the public school; Nancy Parker is at Monsignor Castex in Midland. Liz Easton looks after the centres in Waubaushene and Wyevale, Pat Peltier is in McGuire Park in Penetang, and Therese Maurice is at the community centre in Lafontaine. Jacquie Limoges acts as an assistant rotating among the centres.

## Centres

The aim of the play centres is to 'initiate creative, constructive relationships between parents and children', according to Kym Pruesse. She finds that a wide cross-section of mothers are using the facilities to meet other parents, share new experiences with their children, and simply get out of the house.

The most unusual feature of the Young Years play centres is that the children are accompanied by a responsible adult, such as a parent or babysitter, who takes part in the day's activities.

A loose schedule is followed for daily routines which include crafts, reading stories,

singing circle, scavenger hunts, nature walks, snack time and coffee for the adults.

The concept was initiated by the Good Parenting Association 'by mothers, for mothers', and is dependent on mothers for success, since children are not simply 'parked' for the day.

## Grant

The first weeks of the grant before the opening of the centres last week were spent finalizing locations and doing research for a library on subjects such as child psychology, play therapy, nutrition and household management. The staff were also successful in acquiring materials by 'scrounging for freebies' such as wooden spool furniture, paper, paints. Toys donated to the toy drive are rotated among the centres, and appeal to children from ages 1 to 10.

This is the first time the play centres have been operated through the summer months. They are dependent on volunteer mothers during the rest of the year. However, the project staff is hopeful that they will be able to lay a strong enough foundation this summer so that each centre will be firmly established, equipped, and a core group of mothers formed in each location.

Kym Pruesse explains that although the students don't presume to offer advice to mothers, the play centres are operated under a general set of guidelines. These principles include treating children with dignity, verbally and physically expressing love for them, accepting them for what they are, and encouraging their belief in their own abilities. Children are given a freedom ap-

propriate to their maturity, unconditional acceptance, consistent and loving discipline.

Adults are encouraged to explain the reasons for limits on behaviour, to be available when needed, but step back when not needed, and to share their emotions openly.

Hours for the various play centres are as follows: Waubaushene: Monday all day and Friday morning.

Wyevale: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Midland, Penetanguishene, Port McNicoll and Lafontaine all day every day, except Friday afternoon.

Friday afternoons are spent in evaluating the week's activities and making necessary adjustments. Bi-weekly reports are prepared by the staff so that the progress of the project can be monitored.

Those wanting more information on the 'Young Years Play Centres' should call 549-3588.



Pat Peltier and friends at McGuire Park Play Centre, Penetang



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