

# NEWS RELEASE

**Wilfrid Laurier  
University**



## **Special needs children grow together through integrated arts camp**

*Week of drama, music, dance, arts and crafts lets children create and perform*

**For Immediate Release**

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WATERLOO – Thirty-nine special needs children will showcase their original dance, music and dramatic works during a performance in the Maureen Forrester Recital Hall on July 30 as part of a unique arts camp.

Arts Express is an integrated arts camp especially designed for children ages 6 to 14 with a variety of physical, developmental and communication disabilities. Organized by Laurier professors Leslie O'Dell and Rosemary Fischer, University of Waterloo professor Ruth Priddle and Lana Lee Hardacre of Conestoga College, the camp gives disabled children a unique opportunity to create and perform along with their non-disabled siblings and friends. "There isn't another program like Arts Express that offers all of these activities and still meets the needs of children with disabilities," said Debra Martz Melanson, administrator to Arts Express Camp. "This is an experience these children have never really had and it's very exciting to see the results at the final performance."

The recital, which begins at 1:30 p.m. on Friday, marks the end of a week of activities surrounding the theme *The Wonderful World of Bugs*. From July 26 to 29 at The Rotary Children's Centre on Hallmark Drive, each child participates in drama, music, dance, and arts and crafts and then chooses his or her favorite form of expression for the final recital.

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Despite increasing demand for the program, which has over 150 families on its mailing list, the camp has maintained its small size to ensure close interaction between counselors and children. University students enrolled in Laurier's "Creative Arts for Children with Special Needs" course, act as counselors for the camp.

Arts Express is co-sponsored by The Rotary Children's Centre, the Music Therapy and Theatre programs at Laurier, the Kinesiology Department at the University of Waterloo and the Early Childhood Education program at Conestoga College.

Friday's performance is open to the public and is free of charge.