

# big PLANS in print

*Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities*

Issue 1 · Sept./Oct. 2012

## Magic Carpet Ride: Helping Families Prepare Their Children For School

When Michelle\*, mother-of-three, first enrolled her children in the Magic Carpet Ride program she thought it sounded too good to be true. After all, how could so much be available to her family at no-charge? Michelle, however, soon became an advocate of the program after attending her first session. Not only did she enjoy play-based learning with her kids, but she left feeling encouraged and inspired with new ideas to try at home. Michelle's children were also enthusiastic. They called Magic Carpet Ride 'their school' and couldn't wait to go back each week.

Michelle's family is only one of many that will be participating in the Magic Carpet Ride program as it opens its doors again mid-September for its 14<sup>th</sup> year. This fun family literacy program is provided at no cost; however, offers invaluable rewards as parents and caregivers bring home new strategies to encourage learning in their preschool and kindergarten-aged children.

Throughout the year, families will have the opportunity to learn together in sessions that include stories, songs, play, and activity centres. Flexible in nature, this program is unique in that it responds to the cultural and linguistic needs of participating families while considering age ranges of children enrolled. Since the program runs once a week, parents and caregivers are encouraged to take away a variety of skills and ideas for play-based activities to use with their children at home between sessions.

Each session is run by a family literacy facilitator and there is always something new to look forward to. From art, cooking, science experiments, and holiday themes to dramatic play, prewriting skills, print awareness and sensory activities; children learn to explore and discover at their own level. As children are given the opportunity to make their own choices, parents and caregivers will learn how to follow their child's lead. During each session, there will be a focus on conversation to help kids and



adults expand their vocabularies – from storytelling and rhymes to small group activities and conversation starters. Parents and caregivers will also have the opportunity to learn skills in technology throughout the year. In support of family literacy, several special guests will visit the program, including: the Calgary Public Library, Share the Magic, and a speech language pathologist.

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*Parents Learning About Needs and Skills*

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# magic carpet ride

2012-2013 Location & Dates

The Magic Carpet Ride program will be offered in the following locations in 2012-2013:

North of McKnight Community Resource Centre (95 Falshire Drive NE)  
Tuesdays, beginning September 18, 2012  
9:30 - 11:30 am or 1:00 - 3:00 pm

CCIS Parent Link Family Resource Centre (200, 1509 Centre St. S)  
Tuesdays beginning September 11, 2012  
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Keeler School (4807 Forego Avenue SE)  
Tuesday, beginning September 11, 2012  
1:30-3:00

Valley View School (4105 26 Avenue SE)  
Wednesdays, beginning September 12, 2012  
9:30-11:30 am

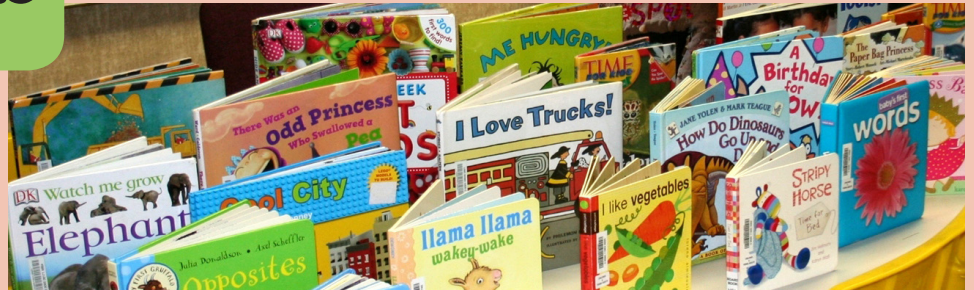
GW Skene School (6226 Penbrooke Drive SE)  
Wednesdays, beginning September 12, 2012  
9:30 - 11:30 am

Erin Woods Elementary School (25 Erin Park Drive S.E.)  
Wednesdays, beginning September 12, 2012  
1:30 - 3:30 pm

Ranchlands Elementary School (610 Ranchlands Blvd NW)  
Wednesdays, beginning September 19, 2012  
1:30 - 3:00 pm

1000 Voices - Genesis Centre of Community Wellness (7556 Falconridge Blvd NE)  
Fridays, beginning September 28, 2012  
10:00 am - 12:00 (noon)

St Mark Elementary School (4589 Marbank Drive NE)  
Fridays, beginning September 21, 2012  
9:30 - 11:30 am



*Magic Carpet Ride Continued from page 1...*

In all aspects, Magic Carpet Ride has an educational focus that supports every member of a family involved in a child's early learning both at home and school and aims to provide a positive transition from home, and other early care settings, to school.

The Magic Carpet Ride Program is funded by the Alberta Government and the City of Calgary and is run by the CanLearn Society (formerly known as the Calgary Learning Centre).

Magic Carpet Ride begins mid-September and runs until the end of May for children ages 0-5 and their parents/caregivers. Please see the sidebar on the left with a complete list of locations and



times. If space is available, there is an opportunity to register mid-way through the year.

For more information and to register, please contact Nada Jerkovic, Manager, Family Literacy at 403 686 9300 x 128 or email at [nada.jerkovic@calgarylearningcentre.com](mailto:nada.jerkovic@calgarylearningcentre.com)

*\*Names in this story have been changed.*



Watch for information on other CanLearn Society Programs in future issues of Big Plans in Print.



# PACT



## Supporting, Encouraging and Informing Calgary Families

Often called “one of Calgary’s best kept secrets”, the Parents and Children Together (PACT) Program is one that all parents should be made aware of. Not only has PACT been running in various locations throughout Calgary for over thirty-five years\*, but it has been the recipient of the Calgary’s Child Magazine Parents’ Choice Awards for the last 16 years!

PACT is a unique program that offers Calgary families:

- *One program for you and all your children, aged 0-5, to attend together.*
- *The opportunity to socialize and connect with parents and children in surrounding communities.*
- *Thought-provoking discussion groups for parents focused on developing resiliency and respectful parenting practices. (Topics fall under the categories of: Child Development and Growth; Play; Parenting Styles; Discipline; Self-Esteem; and Effective Communication and are selected by the participants each session.)*
- *A stimulating child-directed play environment that supports your child’s development through activities such as play dough, painting, crafts, floor toys, dress-up, books, puzzles, building blocks and more!*
- *Opportunities to work on building confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, communication skills, and cooperativeness in your preschoolers - readiness skills for school and life!*
- *Encouragement, support, and a safe place to grow and develop.*
- *An opportunity to enjoy song and story time together each morning.*

As the population of Calgary continues to grow, so does the number of challenges facing our families. More than ever, effective parenting plays a critical role in the healthy development of our future generations. PACT knows that in order to excel, families with young children need support, encouragement and information.

With this in mind, parents enrolled in PACT will participate in two program components, the parent education/discussion group and the children’s program. While half the parents meet in the discussion groups, the children are involved in a child-directed play program supervised by a qualified children’s play coordinator and other

parents. The sociodramatic play encourages brain growth in toddlers and preschoolers through child-directed make-believe (roles, objects, and events) which helps to develop language skills, allows for expression of feelings, and provides opportunities for social interaction.

The PACT parent educators, leading the parent discussion groups, are some of the best in Calgary. They offer information, support, and encouragement to parents on a variety of topics such as:

- *Ages and Stages of Development and Growth*
- *Observation Skills and Play*
- *Parenting Styles*
- *Effective, Respectful Discipline*
- *Fostering Self-Esteem*
- *Family Communication*

In the children’s program, PACT supports the ‘true toy’ revival. At each location toys include such items as play dough, floor toys, dress-up clothes, books, puzzles, building blocks, toy kitchens and house centres, and other toys that require some imagination and make-believe to use. The play-time also gives parents a chance to observe their preschooler(s) at play and begin to test the skills learned in the parent discussion group. The two parent groups alternate weeks, spending one with the children and one with the adults in the discussion group.

Programs operate throughout the year in six locations across the city of Calgary (see sidebar). Between January and June, and again from September to December, each session is eleven weeks in length. The winter session runs from January to March, the spring session runs from April to June, and the fall session runs from September to December.

PACT also runs a short six week summer session in July and August. While registration ahead of time is encouraged, PACT allows for ongoing open enrollment as well as drop-in opportunities. All programs operate from 9:15-11:15am, include snacks (provided by parent volunteers), and currently run on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday mornings at the various locations. The cost is \$175 per family per session or \$285 if registering for two programs/mornings per week.

*\* Years in operation - over fifteen years as PACT and before that as Observation Nurseries of Calgary*

## Fall 2012 PACT Locations

### Tuesdays 9:15-11:15am:

Fall session: Sept. 25 - Nov. 27, 2012

- *Harvest Hills - Harvest Hills Alliance Church - 10099 Harvest Hills Blvd. NE*
- *Scenic Acres - Advent Lutheran Church - 11 Scenic Acres Gate NW*

### Wednesdays 9:15-11:15am:

Fall session: Sept. 26 - Nov. 28, 2012

- *Dalbrent - St. David’s United Church - 3303 Capitol Hill Cres. NW*
- *Millrise - Peace Lutheran Church - 14640 6th St. SW*

### Thursdays 9:15-11:15am:

Fall session: Sept. 27 - Nov. 29, 2012

- *Southwood - Southwood United Church - 10690 Elbow Drive SW*



### How can I get in contact to find out more or to register?

Contact PACT today to enroll at the location/day of your choice or to find out the dates for the winter and spring 2013 sessions! Registration is ongoing, provided the program times/locations that you are interested in do not fill to capacity.

For more information about the program or fees, or to get a registration form sent to you, call (403) 671-1710 or email [P\\_A\\_C\\_T@hotmail.com](mailto:P_A_C_T@hotmail.com).

[www.pact.9f.com](http://www.pact.9f.com)

## Toddlers: Learning By Playing

### Encourage Activity

It might look like just child's play, but toddlers are hard at work learning important physical skills as they gain muscle control, balance, and coordination. Each new skill lets them progress to the next one, building on a foundation that leads to more complicated physical tasks, such as jumping rope, kicking a ball on the run, or turning a cartwheel.

Toddlers always want to do more, which can motivate them to keep trying until they acquire a new skill, no matter what it takes. Take advantage of your toddler's natural desire to keep moving. Even at this early age, kids establish patterns of activity that carry through the rest of childhood. So an active toddler is likely to remain active later.

### Developing Skills

Playing and learning are completely natural for toddlers, so mastering physical skills should be fun and games for them. Parents should give toddlers many opportunities to practice their developing skills while providing supervision so they stay safe while they learn.

In addition to these physical accomplishments, toddlers are developing in other ways. Provide opportunities for yours to explore, ask questions, use his or her imagination, and practice fine motor skills, such as stacking blocks or coloring.

As a general rule, toddlers shouldn't be inactive for more than 1 hour at a time, except for sleeping. That's a lot of work for parents and caregivers, but a lot of much-needed activity for toddlers.

Encourage your toddler to be active, and remember how much he or she is learning along the way.

*Excerpt reprinted with permission and taken from [http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/toddler\\_play.html#](http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/toddler_play.html#)*



**Have you ever wondered how to find out about free events in Calgary? Or where to find the best playgrounds? What about drop in gym time or gymnastics?**


Family Fun Calgary may be the solution you've been looking for. It is a complete resource of events and activities for your family to enjoy in Calgary and surrounding areas! For example, on their Calendar of Events, they pull every single event posting on their website and lay it out chronologically so parents can see what is happening that day or the upcoming weekend.

Another great section of their website is "Cheapies & Freebies" (you'll find that section under either the Events header or the Places header). Here you will find a list of everything happening in Calgary that is free or cheap (under \$5.00) or is heavily discounted.

For example: Did you know that select Calgary Parks and Recreation pools offer \$2 admission for adults and \$1 admission for seniors and kids every Sunday? Did you know about the Rona Little Hammers Club, a free kids' program for the junior handyman and handywomen in your family held on the last Saturday of every month? Or even the Bow Habitat Station Wonderful Wednesdays? If you have children aged two to five, they are invited down to the Bow Habitat Station the first Wednesday of every month at 10am or 1pm for some fun and learning. In each session, kids will learn about elements of nature through crafts, stories, and other activities (sessions are \$5/child and accompanying adults are free).

Visit [familyfuncalgary.com](http://familyfuncalgary.com) for more information on these and other great events and happenings in Calgary.

## World's Best Playdough Recipe

- 
- 1 cup white flour
  - 1/4 cup of salt
  - 2 tsps cream of tartar
  - 1 cup water
  - 1 tbsp oil
  - 2 tsps food colouring

*Mix flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a medium pot. Add water, oil and food colouring. Cook and stir over medium heat. When mixture forms a ball in the pot, turn out and knead on a slightly floured surface. Store in airtight container or plastic bag. For variety, add Kool-Aid powder to dry ingredients instead of food colouring. It will smell great!*

*Recipe courtesy of PACT website.*

*Image source: [themamadramalogues.blogspot.ca](http://themamadramalogues.blogspot.ca)*