

Winter 2016

PRICELESS

CK Child

Your Source for Pregnancy & Parenting in Chatham-Kent



www.ckchild.ca

Welcome to the 2016 Winter Issue of CK Child

CK Child is a hip, local parenting magazine for those raising their children in Chatham-Kent. Our goal is to unite our community by offering various viewpoints on topics relating to all stages of parenthood.

CK Child also highlights the many valuable locally-run businesses in our region & local family-friendly events occurring in C-K. Be sure to check out our new website at www.ckchild.ca

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Plan to get the most...

FROM YOUR CHILD'S RESP



DOUG ROBBINS is a financial planner and seminar specialist with Investors Group Financial Services Inc. (Chatham). Contact the contributor at doug.robbs@investorgroup.com



In a few short weeks your child or grandchild may be heading off to university or college for the first time. Of course you're anxious about how successfully they will take this next big step in their life – but you are not anxious about how you will pay for it because you've long planned for this day by regularly contributing to a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP). Now it's time to start putting that accumulated cash to work – and with the right withdrawal strategies you can minimize the taxes your student will pay and get the full benefits of the Educational Assistance Payments (EAPs) that consist of the Canadian Education Savings Grant (CESG), the Canadian Learning Bond (CLB), and the income earned on the money you saved in the RESP. Here's how ...

WITHDRAW INCOME BEFORE WITHDRAWING CONTRIBUTIONS. As the subscriber to your student's plan, you can elect to withdraw the income as an EAP in the hands of your student – and that's the tax-wise choice because your student's income is likely to be very low.

AVOID WITHDRAWING CONTRIBUTIONS BEFORE YOUR STUDENT BEGINS SCHOOL. Otherwise, you will trigger a repayment of the CESG.

SPREAD OUT THE EAPS OVER THE EXPECTED LENGTH OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM INSTEAD OF TAKING AN ALL-AT- ONCE LUMP SUM. This avoids burdening your student with a huge taxable income in the first year and takes advantage of his or her (presumably) lower marginal tax rates over a number of years.

MAKE THE RIGHT WITHDRAWALS TO AVOID CLAWBACKS. You may be required to refund some of the CESG

grant money if there are any earnings remaining in your RESP plan after your student completes (or leaves) their post-secondary program. To avoid a potential CESG clawback, use up your RESP earnings first.

BE SURE YOU'LL HAVE THE MONEY WHEN YOU NEED IT.

Before releasing an EAP, your RESP carrier will require proof of enrolment – so get that documentation to your carrier as early as possible.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LEFTOVERS. If there are still contributions remaining in the plan after your student finishes college or university, you can use that money as you wish. Transfer it to another child's plan or withdraw it for your personal use.

An education can be expensive -- and that RESP you started so many years ago is about to pay off. A professional advisor can help you make more of those good decisions that will achieve financial stability for your family and a debt-free education for your children or grandchildren.

1 The Canada Education Savings Grant and Canada Learning Bond (CLB) are sponsored by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. CLB eligibility depends on family income levels. Some provinces make education savings grants available to their residents.

Contact the contributor at doug.robbs@investorgroup.com
Like us on facebook: Doug Robbins
Follow us on LinkedIn or Twitter: @igdougrobbs

**This article has been written and submitted by: Doug Robbins*

About the Cover

COVER & BELOW (left to right):
Ayden Yammine (age 9) & Coen Yammine (age 4)

Ayden & Coen were so excited to put on their skates for a fun photo shoot at the Chatham Memorial Arena.

Cover photography by:
Mark Requena Photography
markrequenaphotography.ca



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If you have any comments on this publication please contact us at info@abstractmarketing.ca

Opinions expressed in the CK Child magazine and website are the personal opinions of the original authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor and Abstract Marketing.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Valued Readers,

CK Child has offered our community a place for local writers and businesses to connect with families since I started it in December 2008 - and I have loved every minute I have spent doing this. However, after 8 years of printing this amazing magazine, this will be CK Child's last issue...

at least for now. I'm unsure what the future will hold for CK Child Parenting Magazine and am planning to use this time off wisely so I can bring you a fresh new perspective with CK Child - whether it be in print or online.

A very sincere THANK YOU to all our loyal readers and local businesses who have supported this local publication! This is such an incredible community and I've appreciated all the support you've all given CK Child. Also a huge thank you goes to Abstract Marketing for working with me over the past year - it has truly been a pleasure!

I'd like to leave you with this...always remember the importance of family! It is truly what life is about. Your children will be grown before you know it so do not waste these precious years - love them with everything you have!

I'd love to hear your comments and feedback. Please keep in touch with me at ckchildmag@gmail.com

Warmest Regards,

Tammy Chouinard, Editor & Founder

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Planning a Winter Family Vacation?

FAMILY VACATION SURVIVAL KIT



JOSEPHINE SCEBBA is the Manager of Expedia CruiseShipCenters, located in Village Grove Plaza, Tecumseh, ON. Call her today at 519.956.8777 or email jscebba@cruiseshipcenters.com to book your family's next vacation!

We have all been there: family vacation, crying babies, kicking seat-backs on the plane, behaviour issues, routine and time changes, and endless regrets of wondering, "Man should I have stayed home?"

Well, there is no need for that with these checklists for travel success, turning what could be a stressful family vacation into a dream trip with fantastic memories.

FAMILY VACATION DONE RIGHT

- Buy air early and splurge for non-stops or at least routings that don't include long layovers which will add more stress to you and your children.
- Going on a cruise? Choose a ship and destination together as a family. This allows all of the family members to "buy in" and get involved, building the anticipation for every family member.
- Make reservations as far in advance as you can. Adjoining and "across the hall" cabins become more difficult to find the closer you get to departure.
- Arrange a car or service to get you to the airport and reconfirm the day before. There's nothing like a limo to make your family feel like celebrities and start things off in style.
- Fly in a day before the cruise. Travel schedules can be unpredictable and you could miss the cruise, but if you fly in a day early you can sit back and relax.
- Throw a swimsuit in the carry on! Who wants to wait for the luggage to be delivered when a pool or beach are available?
- Pack early! Reduce your stress by having the bags waiting by the door for a few days before departure. Plus, it'll be a visual reminder of the fun that awaits the family.
- Going on a family vacation doesn't have to be filled with second guessing.



SIMPLE TRICKS WHEN TRAVELING WITH KIDS

- Always provide young children with their own luggage – preferably a backpack, not the roller wheel suitcase that can topple over or be difficult for them. Allowing them their own luggage will get them jazzed about the trip, packing their favourite toy, snack, and books. This will keep spirits high to avoid a moody meltdown while traveling.
- Try to go to a local dollar store with your child prior to going on the trip and have them select a new box of crayons and an activity book. It helps them have ownership and responsibility when packing their own bag.
- The key is to keep the children busy with activities be it a long flight or car ride. Simple trinkets and presents to open every hour is a creative way to pass the time. It does not need to be large or expensive – a small LEGO build toy or a hot wheel car, for example.



FORGOTTEN ITEMS TO BE SURE TO PACK

- Children's Motrin/Tylenol
- Band-Aids
- Hand sanitizer
- Pepto-Bismol multi-purpose tabs
- Gum
- A snack for grownups too
- Ear buds for watching movies or if your children have electronic devices
- Battery-free activities
- Camera
- Travelling with the whole family can be stress-free when you've got the best tips and expert advice you can trust that comes from working with a travel agent.

Contact us today for more information! Happy travelling!

This article has been submitted by Josephine Scebba who is the Manager of Expedia CruiseShipCenters, located in Village Grove Plaza, Tecumseh, ON. Call her today at 519.956.8777 or email jscebba@cruiseshipcenters.com to book your family's next vacation!

Thamesville Maize

TOTAL FUN ON THE FARM



DARIN COOK is a freelance writer who works and plays in Chatham-Kent, and is becoming a Dad around town by taking in children's entertainment and family-oriented attractions with his wife, Jennifer, and their sons, Ethan and Jonah. Share in more of his experiences at www.darincook.ca



With a fair bit of traveling under my belt, my sense of direction over the years has improved. Yet, even close to home, certain scenarios find ways to prove any breath of hope for my directional challenges to be completely unfounded; case in point, the corn maze just past Thamesville can disorient anyone's internal compass. In 2001, Ken and Ingrid Dieleman turned part of their farmland into the Thamesville Maize, cutting a 10-acre maze in the shape of the CN Tower into their cornfields. The site was rebranded in 2013 as iMAZE and the Dielemans have created a different labyrinth every year, along with adding numerous family-friendly attractions. This year marks the unveiling of their sixteenth maze and each one has been completely patriotic, including an emphasis on local history with Chief Tecumseh, the Battle of the Thames, and the War of 1812, as well as farming tributes to 4-H, McGrail Farming Equipment, and



Pioneer Seeds. Whether national, provincial, or local, all of the maze layouts are astounding. The photo gallery on their website www.imaze.ca is proof of the artistry that goes into the designs.

Given the temporary, seasonal nature of the annual mazes, it is only on the website that the lasting impressions of mazes from years past can be seen, including the replicas of the two famous Canadians: astronaut Chris Hadfield in 2014 and comedian Rick Mercer in 2008. There is an entire Rick Mercer Report segment on YouTube of the comedian visiting Thamesville after the Dielemans enticed him with his face in their cornfield. Mercer replied with, "When someone cuts your face into a cornfield, you show up." Seeing his face from a helicopter above, the comedian is moved to say, "This is the strangest moment of my life. Honestly, I don't know whether to be flattered or alarmed."

A few years removed from this brush with fame on Canadian television, the Dielemans partnered with a famous local event, the Chatham-Kent FireFest, by using the outline of a 1927 Stewart fire truck for their 2016 maze. Into its fifth year, FireFest has become the largest show of its kind in Canada, attracting over 100 vintage fire trucks and emergency vehicles; this comes as no surprise with Chatham-Kent holding the title of the Classic Car Capital of Canada. We have been taking our two boys to FireFest for several years, so extending festivities to the Thamesville maze was an easy decision for a fun night out for our family. Several of the FireFest trucks were on display for my boys to climb on before winding our way through the intricate network carved in the cornfield. My oldest son, Ethan, was treating the maze like an adventure; his younger brother, Jonah, approached it with more trepidation, wary of the size of the corn stalks surrounding him.

Before entering the maze, we chose a passport that offers assistance with multiple choice questions when coming to a crossroads. Answering the questions properly sends you in the right direction by providing instructions to turn right or left. There are also Corn Cops throughout the maze to offer guidance to those who feel as if they've been going in circles for too long. Not long into the maze, we found ourselves retracing our steps after being stopped in our tracks by our second dead end. "I knew this was a bad idea," Jonah said. "It's just too hard to get out of."

He was mostly unimpressed because it took time away from the other attractions, especially the Jumbo Jumper, a gigantic bouncy pillow that was the true source of fun for him. The fire truck maze is split into two sections and, after twenty minutes, we made it to the end of the first

half. Jonah went straight for the Jumbo Jumper. To Jonah's credit, the iMAZE motto is "Total Fun on the Farm." The maize on this farm may be all about the maze, but there is plenty to do, like roast s'mores on campfires, play giant board games (chess, billiards, checkers), climb a giant spider web, or shoot corn cobs out of a corn cannon. (Rick Mercer took great pleasure in this on his show with an entourage of politicians, including former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, as targets.)

"Can we do the second half?" Ethan asked. "I really like how challenging it is." Given how much work the Dielemans put into the maze, Ethan had the right idea about seeing the whole thing. They start cutting the maze in June each year, taking up to 80 hours to design and then numerous more hours grooming the paths over the summer before opening in the fall. At the end of their tourist season, the field gets combined down to nothing and, even though all signs of the maze are obliterated, Ingrid says, "After we clean up, we start making plans for the next year. Every maze has memories that go along with it."

I let Ethan lead the way through the second half with reckless abandon, following his instincts that may or may not be guided by an accurate internal GPS. The second half took Ethan and I a little longer, but he was happy to be lost most of the time, going in circles, doubling back to the lookout platform to survey the sea of fields around us. Getting lost sometimes provides welcome diversions, or unexpected moments, or different scenery. Other than a photo of the maze, we never fully appreciated the fire truck image that can only be seen if you fly over the swathe of land. Tramping through dirt paths, corn stalks towering over you, obscuring your vision and confusing your sense of direction, you never know what pattern you are stuck in other than a web of trails that offer a whole lot of fun while getting lost.

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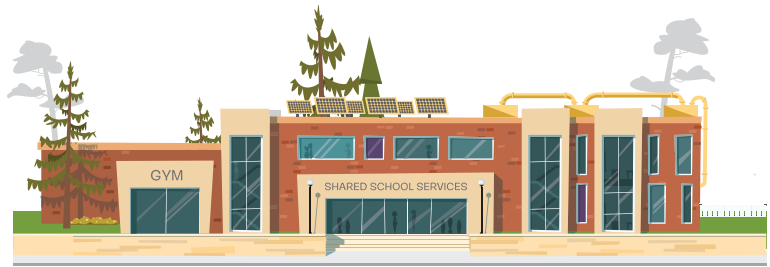
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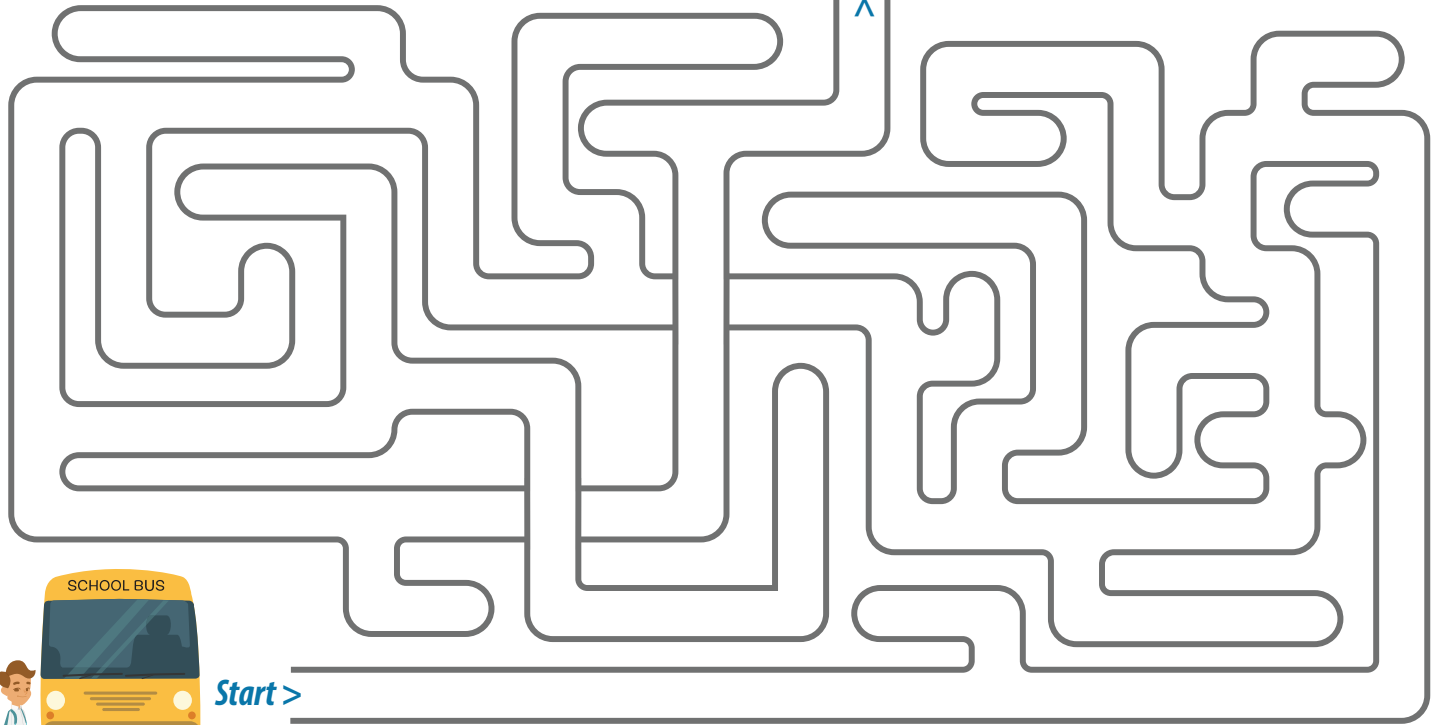
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***Welcome to CLASS!
Learning is fun :)***



Finish
^



Start >

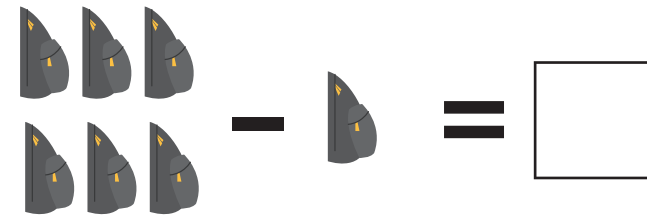
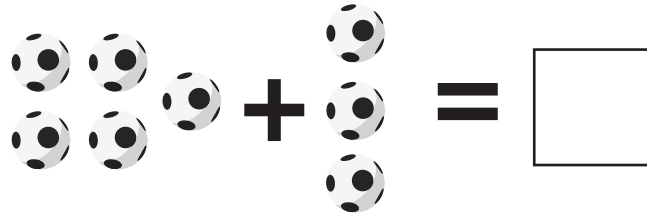
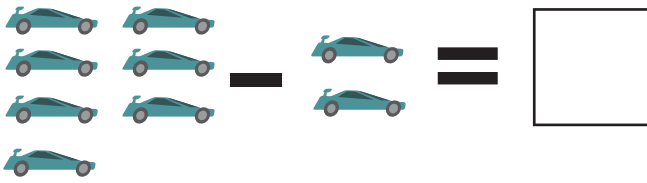
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Math Game



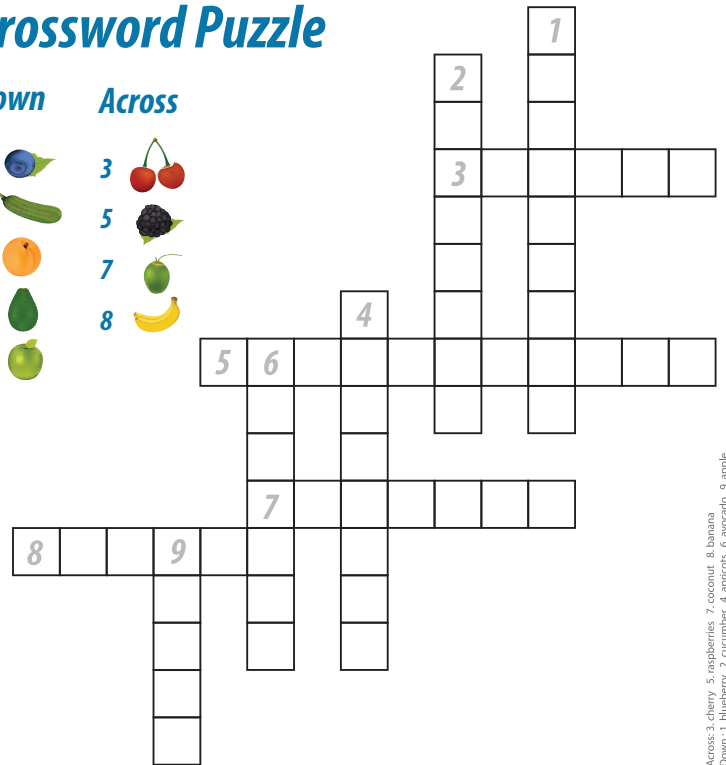
Crossword Puzzle

Down

Across

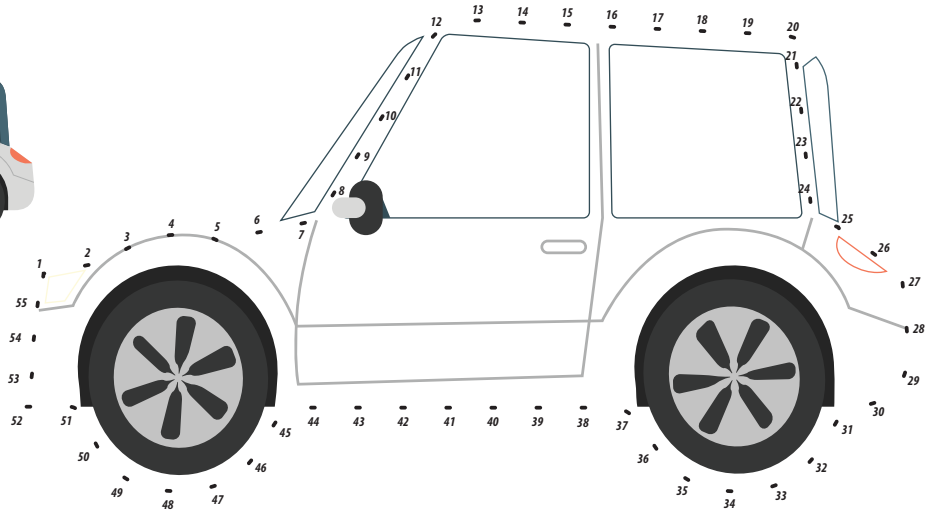
- 1 
2 
4 
6 
9 

- 3 
5 
7 
8 



Across: 3. cherry, 5. raspberries, 7. coconut, 8. banana
Down: 1. blueberry, 2. cucumber, 4. apricot, 6. avocado, 9. apple

Connect the Dots (1 - 55)

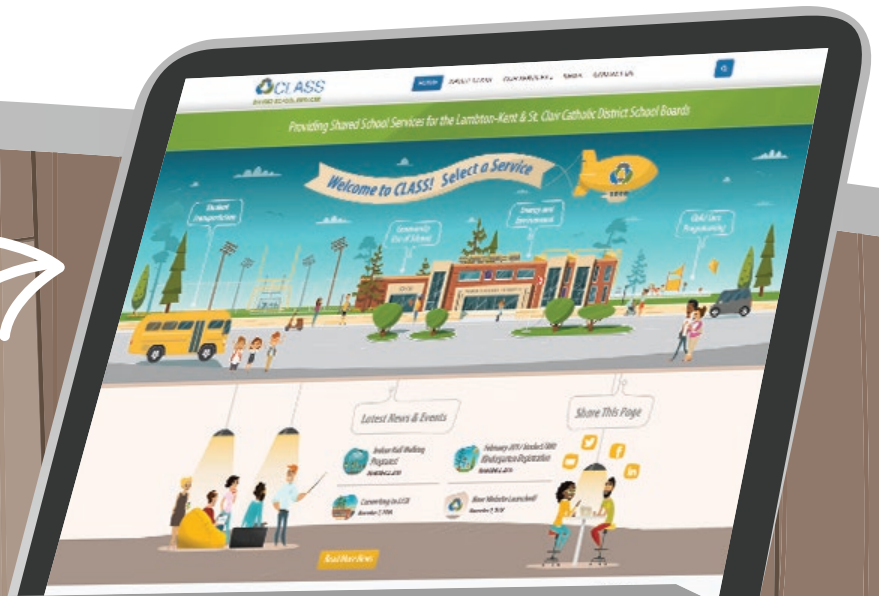


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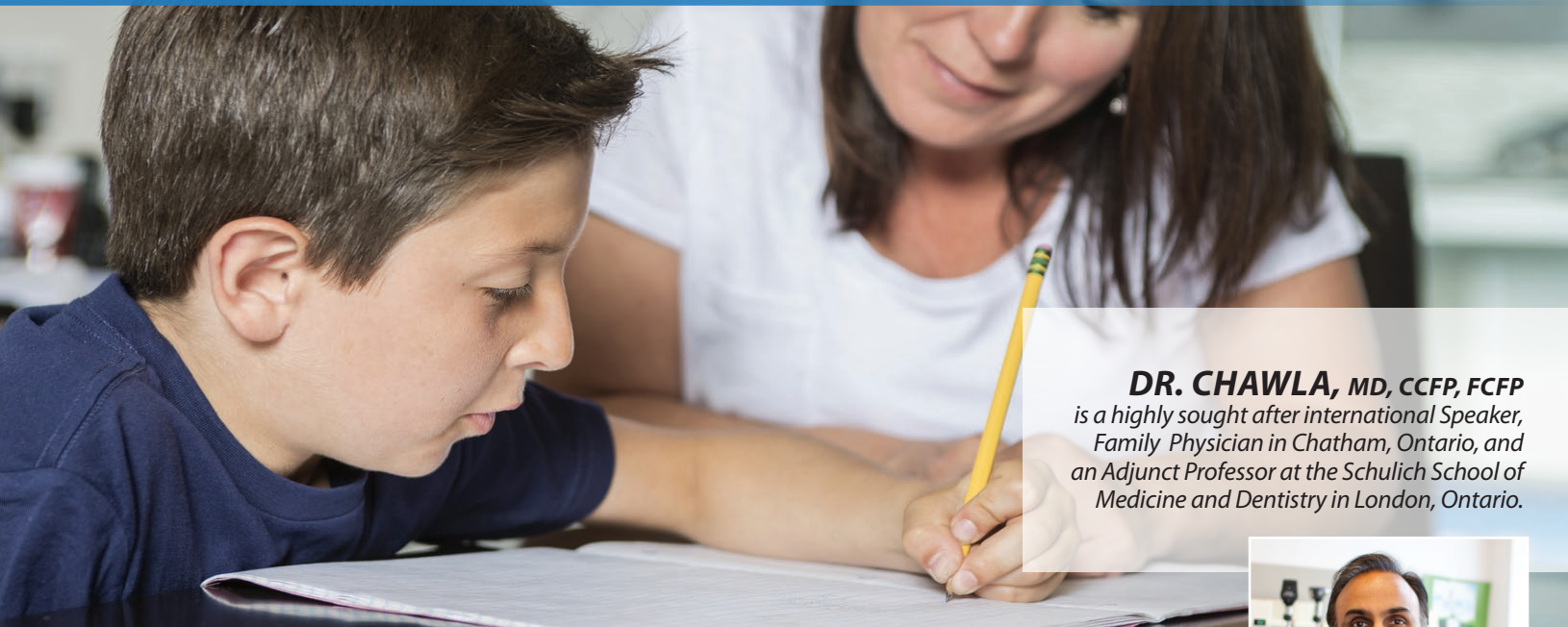
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Encouragement

IS THERE A BETTER WAY?



DR. CHAWLA, MD, CCFP, FCFP
is a highly sought after international Speaker,
Family Physician in Chatham, Ontario, and
an Adjunct Professor at the Schulich School of
Medicine and Dentistry in London, Ontario.

What do we really want to teach our children? Do we want them to be independent? Confident? Resilient? Problem Solvers? The answer: "yes, yes, yes, and yes!" That is what a vast majority of parents would say, but what is the correct path to achieving worthwhile traits? The correct path may not be inherently obvious. It certainly wasn't for me as I've tripped down the wrong path more than I care to admit. So what is a better way?

The answer lies in the way we encourage and praise our children. How many times have you said:

"Great work, you got an A/B on your exam!"

"You scored two goals! That's amazing!"

"That sure is a beautiful piece of art you've created!"

At first glance, these comments seem innocent and appear to be honest praise. We feel we are instilling confidence in our children, but are we?

When we praise the end result, we are praising our children for their achievements. We lose sight of the struggle, effort, and value of the learning process. If this type of praise continues over time, then we are subtly conditioning them to achieve results. Thus, if they don't score well on an exam, or score two goals, or create great art work, they may feel deflated and incomplete. They associate praise and self worth with accomplishment rather than the effort it took to achieve that end result. They also are not clear in terms of what

they did to achieve the end goal. Was it hard work, sacrifice, innate talent, luck?

An alternative way to praise our children is to focus on the process and the effort they put in. For example:

"I'm so proud you worked hard. You put your iPad away and focused your energy on the task."



***"When we praise the end result,
we are praising our children
for their achievements.
We lose sight of the struggle
and effort and the value
of the learning process."***

"I love the fact that you worked through your frustration and didn't give up!"

"I'm glad you asked for help after working at it for so long, and you didn't want me to do it for you...that's good character."

This type of praise teaches them that the end result is not the objective. That achievement is not everything. It teaches them that persistence, patience, and personal power is valued. When we focus on the process, we focus

on building character. We also teach them that failure is okay and something we learn from. Failure is necessary in order to create something. As parents, it's our duty to indirectly teach them that failure is not to be feared but welcomed. If we don't teach them this valuable lesson, every disappointment in their life is a catastrophe and getting back on the proverbial horse will remain a lifelong struggle. This type of praise gives them the inherent ability to

examine the strength in their failures and the ability to cope when everything doesn't go their way. It sends a clear message - don't give up when you fail, reconstruct a new goal and find meaning in the small missteps. When we focus on the end result, we are implying that the end result is the key goal of any endeavor. We don't draw attention to the more important aspirational traits that we want our children to learn such as confidence, team work, and resilience, for example.

Who do you want on your team? A person who knows how to work hard and reach for a solution, or a person whose identity is solely focused on achieving the end result without appreciating the process? Process thinking allows an individual to have an open mind. It teaches the value of patience and learning continuously to achieve what you desire. It also teaches you that you might not always get what you want and that's okay. It broadens a person's identity and empowers them to think bigger.

It's a small shift in praising the child, but a huge shift in mentoring the person we want them to become.

Dr. Lalit Chawla, MD, CCFP, FCFP

Dr. Chawla

Follow Dr. Chawla on Facebook! Go to [f / Lalit Chawla MD](https://www.facebook.com/LalitChawlaMD)

CHECK OUT:

DR. CHAWLA'S MAGIC & MEDICINE WEBSITE

www.magicandmedicine.ca

DR. CHAWLA ABC NEWS ARTICLE, FEATURED APRIL 2016

Visit: www.abcnews.go.com

Search: How to Detect a Lie: The Art and Science of Reading People.

RICK NICHOLLS, MPP CHATHAM-KENT-ESSEX



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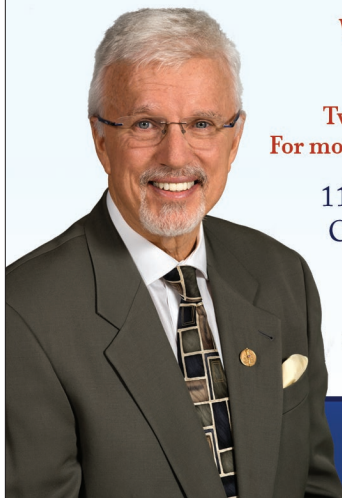
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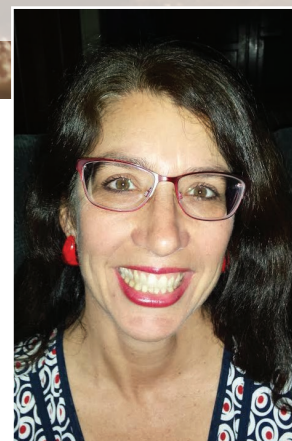


For the Love of Reading

GUIDING YOUR CHILD INTO THE WORLD OF BOOKS



WANDA BELL is a qualified teacher who tutors privately. She is a writer and a member of the Kent Writer's Guild. She is pursuing the publication of her first middle grade novel, "Charlotte's Journey." Wanda can be reached at 226.627.0248 or by email at wandalbell1@gmail.com



Love You Forever by Robert Munsch is a treasured story found on the bookshelves of countless parents. It is read aloud while rocking baby to sleep and well into the toddler years. Then the bundle of joy is singing the ABC's and moms and dads everywhere haul home the *Dr. Seuss* books that bring laughter, rhymes, and imaginative word creation to life. I am a fan of *Green Eggs and Ham*, and *Oh! The Places You'll Go*. Everyone has their favourites.

Fewer parents rush out to Coles for bedtime stories as junior advances through the middle and later years of school, however, the love of reading needs to be nurtured during these critical years as well. Perhaps the bedtime ritual of curling up together with a book is not done nightly, but it helps to still do it occasionally; it can be regarded as a treat. Reading to your child, at every age, is bonding and develops important language skills.

As your child grows they can read alone now and a supply of books on the nightstand is key to encouraging the reading habit. Reading for pleasure is a wonderful pastime, and if it catches on in grades 4, 5, and 6, it is almost guaranteed that their vocabulary will expand, and their writing and grammar will improve. Also, recreational reading is simply a joy that can continue well into adulthood. I know I was one of those kids reading under the covers with a flashlight once I was sent up to bed, and, even today, I still like to read before I finally close my eyes for the night. I find it calming and there are studies that prove this to be true.

Not every child thinks of reading when they say they "have nothing to do"; but, if they have a library card and a supply of books on hand that they themselves chose, it will be that much easier to guide them into the world of books.

Boys, especially, may struggle with the lack of motivation to sit down and read. It seems much more common to see girls glued to their novel and unable to function at anything else until they finish, or get to the end of that particular chapter. Boys, however, may need to be enticed with the comic-style books, and this is perfectly fine and a great spring-board to deeper and more nuanced stories.

Don't frown on *Captain Underpants*, at least your son is reading. He will soon tire of the graphic novels and move on to other reading adventures.

Stepping back in time, bursting the confines of space, and facing strange science experiments that have gone wrong are just some of the exciting prospects that await. Children can travel to different parts of the world without ever leaving the confines of their home. Remind your child how much fun reading can be and watch their imagination soar!

Finally, remember that kids are always watching and doing as mom and dad do. If you model reading as an everyday pleasure, junior will see the merits and take more interest too. Dig out your old favourites, subscribe to newspapers and magazines, join a book club, or visit the library. You will send a subtle message about the importance of the written word, while enjoying yourself.

So, as you go shopping this holiday season, be sure to pick up a book or two for your child, whether they are 4 or 14..... and grab one for yourself too!

Below is an age-appropriate list of some of my favourites, but your child's teacher and the fine librarians at the public library are always happy to make suggestions as well.

BOOKS FOR PRESCHOOLERS

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr.
- *Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister
- *Corduroy* by Don Freeman

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AGES 4-8

- *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg
- *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
- *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter
- *Curious George* by Hans Augusto Rey
- *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish
- *Clifford, the Big Red Dog* by Norman Bridwell

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AGES 9-12

- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
- *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- *The Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynne Reid Banks
- *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
- *James and the Giant Peach: A Children's Story* by Roald Dahl
- *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume
- *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* by Beverly Cleary
- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis
- *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt
- *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery

BOOKS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

- *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls
- *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien
- *Summer of the Monkeys* by Wilson Rawls
- *The Cay* by Theodore Taylor
- *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth George Speare



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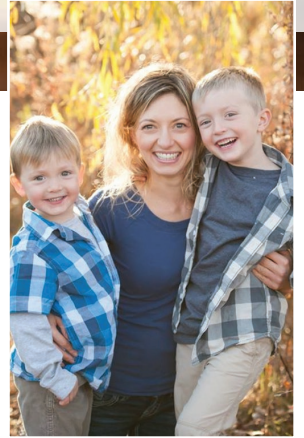


Spay and Neuter

A NEW LOOK AT THE PROS AND CONS



DR. EMILY DURBIN, BSc, DVM
moved from Saskatchewan to Chatham-Kent in 2003. Dr. Emily recalls, "I moved here to be part of a fantastic team at this exciting progressive veterinary hospital. And now we love it here! The people are friendly and have small town values. It means a lot to be able to raise my children in a place where they can benefit from both rural and urban community."



Congratulations!! You've brought home a new puppy or kitten! This is a very exciting time for a family! So what next? Good quality food – **check!** Visit your veterinarian so your new fur-baby stays healthy – **check!** Toys, supplies, training – **check! check! check!** Now what about spaying and neutering? Preventing unwanted litters of puppies and kittens is a cardinal rule of pet ownership, and spaying and neutering is the best way to do that. However, recently there are a lot of different opinions on the best age to perform these major surgeries, which techniques to use, and potential for long-term health problems.

When I went to veterinary school we were taught that pets should have their spay or neuter surgery performed at 6 months old; this would help control the pet population and there were no negative health consequences. That was over fifteen years ago and since that time most veterinarians, including myself, have performed these surgeries on pets much younger, and much older than 6 months old. So is the recommendation changing? Maybe... at the time, this recommendation was based on some facts and some assumptions, but things in science and medicine are changing all the time.

What we knew then:

1. A spay is a major abdominal surgery performed on female pets to remove the entire uterus and ovaries. It prevents unwanted pregnancies and heat cycles. Neutering is also major surgery, performed on male pets that removes the testicles, preventing unwanted pregnancies.
2. These surgeries remove almost all the sex hormones from the pet (estrogen in the girl pets and testosterone in the boys).
3. Many serious and life threatening diseases can be prevented by

removing reproductive organs and sex hormones, including uterine and prostate infections, mammary (breast) cancer, testicular cancer, and hernias.

4. Some undesirable pet behavior (urine marking, mounting, vocalizing) associated with breeding can be prevented when puppies/kittens are spayed and neutered.

5. By 6 months old, most puppies and kittens are entering puberty – they are still growing, but have the potential to be fertile.

6. By 6 months old, puppies and kittens have matured enough to tolerate anesthesia as safely as an adult animal.

So, 6 months old for spay and neuter surgery became the best recommendation with the information we had. Now we have newer, more complicated information, newer drugs, and improved surgery techniques. When making decisions about spay and neuter, pet owners and veterinarians have more sophisticated goals than just prevention of unwanted pregnancy and survival of surgery. 6 months old is still a good recommendation, but probably simplistic, and may not address the unique needs of all breeds, genders, and life situations of pets. So what has changed?

1. We now know removing the source of sex hormones from growing puppies and kittens can have an effect on the way they grow.
2. Removing the sex hormones may contribute to development of some diseases later in life in pets already at risk for these problems, including obesity, joint disease, and urinary incontinence.

3. Most of the published medical research available on the long-term effects of early spay and neuter is outdated and flawed. The findings from studies that just focus on one breed or one disease cannot be applied to all breeds or diseases. There is a lot of bad information available to pet owners based on misinterpretation or over interpretation of the available research, or biased personal opinions.

4. New anesthetic drugs are safer and very low risk for pediatrics, making anesthetic procedures on pets less than 6 months old much safer than before, if used properly and monitored carefully by licensed veterinary medical professionals.

5. Many pet rescue groups need early (8-12 week old) spay and neuter programs to be able to function properly, as it is not feasible or in the pet's best interest to be held in a shelter until they are 6 months old or older before they can be adopted.

6. Veterinarians need to consider the pet's breed, gender, health risk factors, and lifestyle when making a recommendation on the best age to perform spay and neuter.

As a new vet, I thought I was doing a great job by spaying or neutering every puppy and kitten at 6 months. But now I'm performing (safely and successfully) these surgeries on pets from rescue groups at 8 weeks old, so they get into their forever home sooner and the rescue has room to take in more pets in need, while at the same time discussing delaying these surgeries in patients from homes with very low risk for unwanted pregnancy.

As a general rule I still recommend 6 months old as an appropriate age for cats and small dogs. They finish their skeletal development well before 1 year of age, much earlier than large and giant breed dogs, so removing the sex hormones has minimal effect on their growth and development. Also, with cats in particular, there are huge behavioral benefits to spaying and neutering before puberty. Just ask anyone who has ever had a cat in heat!! With large breed (60+ pounds at maturity) female dogs, I generally still recommend spaying at 6 months as the risk of breast cancer and unwanted pregnancy outweighs the potential benefit of waiting until after they have gone through a heat cycle. Also performing a spay on a large mature dog is a much more complicated surgery, and has potential to be riskier than with a puppy. It's large breed male dogs that I really think may benefit the most from delaying the neuter surgery until they are a few months older - 12-14 months. It's important to discuss this decision with your veterinarian, so the lifestyle and health factors for YOUR dog can be accounted for. Don't be surprised if different veterinarians have different opinions, or our opinions change over the next couple years. That just means that your veterinarian is continuing to look for the best solutions for your pet's health!



*Pictured Above: High School & Adult Volunteers, 2016
Photo Collage Credits: Don Hector, Jim Blake*

Youth Learning About Water

8th Annual Children's Water Festival

A record 1800 elementary students from Chatham-Kent and Lambton Counties attended the Annual 3 Day Children's Water Festival at the popular C.M. Wilson Conservation Area in early October. The Chatham-Kent & Lambton Children's Water Festival educates Grade 4 and 5 level children about water conservation, protection, and related environmental issues through 40+ fun and interactive activities.

This fall, more than 450 volunteers from a wide diversity of community groups assisted in this event. Over 12,000 elementary students from the Lambton and Chatham-Kent areas have attended this event during the eight year period.



Photo Credit: Randy Dunlop Photography

Many thanks to the hundreds of volunteers, sponsors, and funders who assisted in this very successful Annual Festival! The 9th Annual Festival will be held Oct. 3 to 5, 2017. For more information, visit www.ckwaterfest.com

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