



Media Release

Media Contact:

Beth Williams, Communications Manager

beth@ourkidsnetwork.ca

905-630-5263

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OTF Grant Supported a three-year Focus on Early Child Development in Halton to Help Young Children Thrive

Halton Region – On Wednesday, community partners gathered at McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School in Acton to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) for the \$746,700 Grow grant and celebrate the [Our Kids Network Early Years Initiative](#), a project that focused on building strength and resiliency in young children over the past three years.

In 2016, the Our Kids Network (OKN) collaborative initiative (led by ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development) received a three-year, \$746,700 Grow grant from OTF to collaborate with community partners and families, and intentionally focus on supports and knowledge that help young children transition more successfully into grade one. Funds from the OTF grant supported staffing, program development, communications, meetings, and program materials for the evidence-based initiative that enhanced programming and provided parent education and information activities.

At the event on Wednesday, Mark Hensen, from the office of Effie Triantafilopoulos, MPP for Oakville North-Burlington, delivered greetings from the MPP on the work done with the grant.

“Our government supports the work of the Our Kids Network Early Years Initiative and we are glad the program is supported over three years by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The work the initiative does will help the community and agencies for years to come as they plan early years programs and plans,” said MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos.

Over the last three years, Our Kids Network brought community partners together - schools, libraries, public health, recreation, child care centres, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, mental health, child protection, multicultural council, faith community, developmental services - to promote early child development. Based on a successful pilot program in Acton, the initiative set in motion strategies and plans to strengthen parents' early childhood knowledge and skills and reduce the number of developmentally vulnerable children in Halton. [Read the Acton case study.](#)

“Research is clear that a focus on building strength in our young children produces life-long, positive results,” said Elena DiBattista, director of Our Kids Network. “We appreciate this financial support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which enabled us to make a significant investment in the future of our children.”

Some facts about families with young children:

- Twenty-eight percent (1,738) of Halton children are vulnerable on one or more Early Development Instrument domains¹.
- We know that adults are responsible for the quality of children's relationships. When parents report that they have stronger relationships with their children, they are also more likely to say that their children

are on track to thrive.³ For infants and young children, this means feeling cared for, connected and secure.

- In a survey by Search Institute®, most parents say they Express Care, Challenge Growth, and Provide Support to their kids. However, fewer than half say they Share Power and Expand Possibilities.²
- Twelve percent of parents of Halton kindergarten-aged children reported feeling extremely or very stressed in the last two weeks.
- The percentage of Halton parents who report eating meals together as a family all five days in a school week decreases from kindergarten (82 percent) to Grade 10 (53 percent).⁴

1. [Early Development Instrument Halton Community Profile 2003 to 2015 Results](#)
2. www.search-institute.org/downloadable/SearchInstitute-DontForgetFamilies-Report-10-13-2015.pdf
3. Keepconnected.searchinstitute.org/
4. [Halton Youth Parent Survey](#)

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. OTF awarded more than \$120 million to some 700 projects this year to build healthy and vibrant Ontario communities. www.otf.ca

Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth. Guided by research, the network provides leadership for planning and integrating services and supports so all children thrive. www.ourkidsnetwork.ca

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