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## Conference Shares Knowledge on Parenting Practices

In May, more than 125 front-line parent/family education professionals heard the latest research on children, youth and families at Parenting Education Today: Impacting Practice Conference organized by the UpStart's Parenting Task Force.

Graham Clyne, Director of UpStart called for a change in the design of parenting programs to better reflect what we know about the interests of parents. Based on research conducted by Invest in Kids, Clyne suggested that parenting courses be offered at flexible times, information be packaged in a more conversational tone and that classes include time for parents to network and make friends. Graham also highlighted the importance of re-designing our schools to support more community and family-oriented activities.

Dr. J. Douglas Willms with the University of New Brunswick presented information from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. The survey shows that success is predicated on the ability of parents to understand the role they play in their child's development. Essentially, parents need a well-balanced mix of "demandingness" and "responsiveness". Demandingness refers to parental control or the parent's demands of the child for mature behaviour, and compliance. Responsiveness is the extent to which parents are loving, responsive to the child's needs and recognize the child's individuality. This type of parenting which balances demandingness with responsiveness is termed as "authoritative". Authoritative parents tend to have children with the least incidents of inattention, physical aggression, poor physical health, and low self-esteem.



**UpStart's Graham Clyne welcomes Dr. Willms to parenting conference**

Dr. Rosemary Reilly of Concordia University provided practical information for front-line parenting educators, stressing the importance of understanding audience needs and designing programs around parents' personal learning preferences. Rosemary emphasized the important interplay between learning activities, discussion, and group development.

A number of attendees have offered to take part in follow-up conversations facilitated by members of the Parenting Task Force that will help set the stage for changes in parenting education.

## Youth Helping Youth



**Sara Loudon behind the scenes at fashion show fundraiser**

This spring, Sara Loudon threw the fashion event of the season. Designer clothes hung on racks from boutiques around Calgary, and hair and makeup artists arrived, toolboxes in tow, ready to create living works of art. Nearly 200 attendees sat in the audience, humming with excitement as the DJ warmed up.

Just six months earlier, UpStart's Social Imaging Action Group (SIAG) launched the TRUE YOUTH Media Toolkit to help combat the stereotypes of youth that permeate

the media. "The Toolkit was designed to help youth-serving organizations and youth work with different forms of media to promote more positive coverage of youth," explains Amber Forest, Associate with UpStart.

Sara Loudon attended the youth training session and was captivated by the idea that youth can have a voice, and that voice can be powerful. "I wanted to use my love of fashion to give back," explains Sara.

Sara raised a whopping \$4,200 dollars that will be used by UpStart to improve quality of life for Calgary's kids. Sara's story is a great example of youth taking action to make their communities better.

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## at work

### Raising the Profile of Early Childhood Development in Alberta

UpStart is beginning to work with experts and community leaders to advance an Early Child Development agenda in Alberta. This longer-term initiative will require an innovative and uniquely Albertan approach that includes the input of Albertans, and makes a concise and clear case for enhancing our ECD efforts. Partnerships will involve cross-ministerial engagement, and participation by diverse and representative community groups, the private sector, and rural constituents.

UpStart and its partners have begun working on a clear, common language document outlining the case for an ECD strategy in Alberta. This piece will summarize the current provincial situation; outline the most important scientific evidence on the link between healthy ECD and important long-term societal outcomes; describe the demographic and productivity imperatives; and, highlight the economic return on investment we can anticipate.

**Watch this newsletter in the coming months to find out more.**

## Upcoming Events

### Calgary After School Initiative Scheduled to Launch in September

UpStart's Margie Ronca serves on the steering committee for the City's Calgary AfterSchool program that provides youth between the ages of 6 to 16 with opportunities to participate in a variety of activities during the hours of 3 to 6 p.m. In addition to providing funding to support an increase in after school programming, this citywide program will feature a centralized website where parents, children and youth can learn about programs offered in their communities. UpStart is proud to have played a part in what could be the first time that a Canadian city has undertaken such a comprehensive and coordinated approach to afterschool programs. Watch for the official strategy launch in September.



BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

#### UpStart Champions for Children and Youth

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