

# Day care aids child growth

by Nora Jenkins

The need for day care centres is a widely recognized fact — not only for the service to working parents or students, but also for the benefits which are bestowed on the child from the atmosphere of a properly established centre.

Universities across Canada have realized the need for day care centres for the children of their married students. At UBC, Calgary, and UNB, such nurseries have been established. Here, at Dalhousie, facilities have been provided for the children of students at the University Children's Centre, located at 1094 Wellington St. This nursery is recognized for its high standards and can be used as a model for other nurseries. It provides an observation centre for the faculties of various universities and teaching hospitals in the Halifax area.

#### LICENSED

The University Children's Centre is licensed for 75 children. It is divided into four sections: infants, six months - two years; toddlers, 2-3 years; juniors, 3-4 years; and seniors, 4-5 years. With its large play areas and (low) child-staff ratio, its facilities are the finest in the city. The outdoor playground provides safe and supervised exercise so important to apartment and city dwellers. The hours are con-

venient to the working mother, as the Centre opens at 8 a.m. and closes at 5:30 p.m.

The prime concern of the Centre, beyond the child's care, is the physical, intellectual and social development of the children. The promotion of curiosity, the growth of language development and the generation of readiness for later intellectual activities are the goals set by the Centre. The enlargement of a child's span of experience, the emotional goals of security, and self-respect, the successful social interaction with his peers and the child's physical wellbeing and development are all achieved through a stimulating environment and individually structured programs.

The goals are recognized through play therapy. The play approach may be spontaneous or structured. The spontaneous periods include climbing, jumping, tumbling, riding tricycles and wagons, catching and throwing balls, running, responding actively to musical experiences by rhythmic role playing, and learning the very important motor behaviour of skipping and hopping.

The structured periods of play take place in a quieter playroom atmosphere to develop the fine muscle responses. Block building, carpentry, table top



Wayne Gillespie photo

activities of puzzles, matching shapes, colours and designs, listening to records, pasting, cutting and painting are some activities that are included in such play periods.

#### ACTIVITY ENCOURAGED

The multi-sensory approach is evident in children from an early age in the acts of feeling, tasting and smelling. These activities

are encouraged by cooking. As the children mix cookies, they taste the ingredients. After they have baked the cookies, they are eaten at snack time. The hot meal served to the children daily is an integral part of the program, for it is a time when ideas flow freely and experiences are shared between teacher and child.

Story telling is also a very important part of the day. Stories are selected which will be easily understood by the child and will be a stimulus. Many books available in the book corner, which the children are encouraged to use themselves, are superior in content, style and illustrations to the standard school textbooks.

#### LANGUAGE IMPORTANT

The infant section is considered a very important area of the nursery. This is the starting point of the child's intellectual, emotional, and social development. The staff is also aware of the importance of language development at this young age, and encourage expanding sentence structure. By playing, talking, singing, and encouraging the babies, they develop the concept of self. Through the sensory stimulation of painting, water play, sand play, pasting and many thought provoking toys, the babies are absorbing thought processes of classifying, quantifying and generalizing.

Studies have proved that the type of stimulation provided at the University Children's Centre, and other such day care centres, increases the IQ. The exposure to a wide variety of activities greatly enhances the child's later intellectual development and his chances of developing into a well-rounded adult.

Many students from Dalhousie have used this centre and found it a useful source of information on the development of normal children. Observers are frequently amazed at the realized

potential development of the child as exhibited in the playroom of the nursery, where they are allowed to develop freely at their own speed.

#### DEVELOPMENT COMPLEX

This fall the parents and staff of the Centre have met to discuss the nursery and topics in child development. Guest speakers provide stimulating and informative thoughts on aspects of learning processes of children.



Wayne Gillespie photo

Highly qualified people in child development are available in this region. The enthusiasm of parents and staff have made it evident that such parent-teacher meetings at the pre-school level are desirable as well as educational. It is necessary that the parents are aware of the child's stage of development in the nursery as well as understanding the nature of child development in its many and complex stages.

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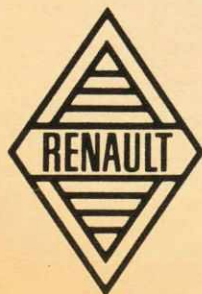
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