



# THE STAR

SPRING 2024



Developmental  
Disabilities Association

# THE EVOLVING FACE OF PARENTING

BY ALANNA HENDREN



Parents today are the first generation in the history of homo-sapiens that takes a 'child-first' approach to raising kids. We view each child as a special, individual with their own unique needs and gifts.

This is how we view children with disabilities because their brain development does not necessarily follow the same progression as typical kids, who hit developmental milestones at about the same age, as their brains grow and learn. Most kids start crawling, walking, and talking at about the same age.

Before very recent times in the evolution of human beings, and prior to the onset of rapid communications and information technology, women generally had more than one or two children. Up until the 1850s and the Industrial Revolution, people lived on farms where women would have upwards of ten to twelve children and grow food, cook, sew, do laundry, clean, tend to livestock, and keep their husbands alive. They did not care if their kids were self-actualized and working toward their developmental milestones. They had no books or child development experts available to consult with, but still, they raised the people whose descendants populate the world today. Farmers did what it took to survive and found that their children learned by interacting with their environments and each other. Big families had an economic advantage because they had more kids to help with farm and housework.

When reliable birth control emerged in the 1960s and women were able to work alongside men, they chose to have fewer children so each one became more precious. China had a one-child policy so the concept of only children became more widespread and all the energy mothers and fathers expended on 13 kids with lots of space to run around became focused on just one, generally living in apartments. Rather than expecting children to fit into the lives of their parents like back in the day, parents today seem to do everything they can to please their children. This is not a bad thing, but along with the urbanization of humanity since 1850 or so, it's a new thing.

Then social media arrived in a big way only about 20 years ago and a new virtual world of child rearing followed, supported by businesses selling to families who want their kids to have the best of everything. The best advertising creates desire so a lot of this marketing appeals to the escalating (often invented) needs of infants and children. Courses that accelerate learning abound, swimming and gymnastics start at 2 and a lifetime of extra-curricular activities follows. Most children abandon these activities when they're adults but they are good for physical,

musical and artistic development. Schools used to operate these activities after school but that was abandoned a long time ago so families do a lot of driving from place to place to maximize their child's potential. The truth is that children develop at their own pace and most accelerated learning in childhood does not provide an advantage unless the child has a developmental disability. Children's brains develop at a predictable pace and they can only absorb what their developing brains can handle.

Recent research has discovered that mothers today spend twice as much time and fathers spend four times as much time each day with their children as they did 50 years ago yet children, teens, and adults have more mental health problems today than they ever have. Families feel like they're running just to catch up. Children are no longer a net economic benefit to their families – quite the contrary – today kids cost a lot of money. Adding to the stress of parenting is a constant feeling that what they're doing is not good enough. When parents have a child with a disability, they can feel even more inadequate.

So what can we learn from our predecessors? Calm down. No parent is perfect and raising kids is really hard in a modern world filled with super high expectations, fake truth, and limited time. All children need healthy food, clean water, fresh air, warmth, physical activity, a stable environment, and lots of love, the sacred sauce of parenting. Children don't need the best of everything. They don't need everything they want or see on TV. They don't need to be structured all the time. They need parents to set boundaries, say no at times and mean it, teach them life skills and love them even when it's hard.

"Family-centred" is still the best way to go and we at DDA are here to provide specialized infant services for families who have children with special needs and childcare for all children. The good news is that with \$10 per child care fully implanted at DDA, our support to families will be affordable to everyone.



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION FESTIVAL



A big thanks to Community Living BC for including us and many others in the Vancouver Community Inclusion Festival at Britannia Community Centre in January.

It was great to see many of the Lower Mainland's community support organizations in one place! From Autism BC to BC People First to Special Olympics BC, and of course, DDA, it was nice to meet up with cohorts and self-advocates alike.

On hand were MPs Don Davies and Jenny Kwan who said a few words of support and encouragement. Also, a big thank you to staunch advocate Spencer van Vloten from BC Disability who helped organize the event.

## DDA IN THE COMMUNITY – VSB TRANSITION FAIR 2024

In January, DDA attended the Vancouver School Board Transition Fair. This forum offers information and resources to students with disabilities and their families, who are preparing to make the transition into adult life. This was a great opportunity to highlight the variety of ways we can support youth and their families who are preparing for this big life change. DDA offers a life skills program for youth, the Youth Transition program, which helps youth focus on goals they have for their transition to adult life. Goals are often around resume writing, applying for post-secondary education, money management, and bus training to name a few. This program requires a referral from MCFD.

Jobs West is DDA's Supported Employment program, which works with youth and adults who need some extra support to find (and keep) meaningful employment. To learn more about Jobs West, you can call the program at 604-7327776. The Transition Fair also allowed us to highlight our Family Support Program, which can help families with many different areas of service planning, system navigation, and connecting to resources. If this sounds like something you would like help with, you can call us at 604-327-9111. It was a pleasure meeting with so many youth and their families, and we look forward to doing this again.



# BERWICK CDC HOSTS SOUTH KOREAN SPECIAL EDUCATION EXCHANGE



In late November, representatives from the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education in South Korea visited Berwick Child Development Centre to learn more about inclusive education policies & systems in British Columbia.

DDA and BC Centre for Ability were recommended to this travelling contingent, and Berwick hosted a joint meeting to share our inclusion philosophy and practices. Lara McNaughton, a Program Supervisor with Supported Child Development gave insight on the service models within the BC Centre for Ability and Kathy Moncalieri, Assistant Director of Child and Youth Services fielded questions about child care in BC, supports available

from various levels of government and fostering inclusion within our programs.

This group was very interested in our model of team teaching and celebration of differences. Their aim to reduce the stigma of raising a child with disabilities (currently common in their community), lead to a fruitful conversation of new ideas and strategies to take back home. Thank you to Katharine Naughton, Berwick's Manager, and our wonderful team of Early Childhood Educators who displayed the excellence in care that DDA is so proud of!



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS WITH DDA!

The holiday season is behind us as we look ahead to, hopefully, a warm spring. We ate and danced and sang. We held Christmas parties and were visited by the Jolly Old Elf himself. We collected toys for children who are less fortunate than us for the Christmas Bureau Toy Drive. Another year meant many donations to DDA from organizations that spread wealth and goodwill. We battled a huge dump of snow after December and made the best of it at our Fraserview Child Development Centre where Smiles the Snowman was created. We are all looking forward to the rest of 2024 as the sun warms us up and prepares us for a fun summer!



# CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

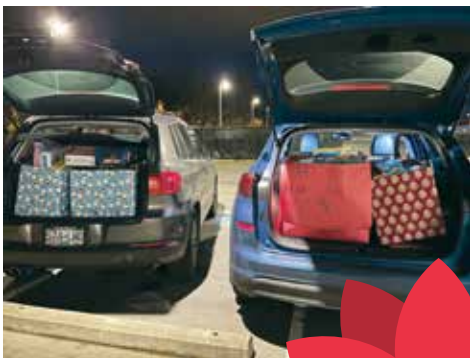
This year, the Family Support Program held our biggest hamper drive yet. We purchased 27 Quest Food Exchange hampers, which are Christmas dinner in a box. Each box came with a turkey, variety of fruits and vegetables, gravy, cranberries, sweet treats, and gift card to Quest Food Exchange. And recipes for everything, too!

A BIG thank you to East 16th and Victoria Day Programs. The individuals from East 16th Day Program picked up the hampers from the depot, loaded them into the van, brought everything back to Kaslo, and sorted the hampers before heading out for their deliveries.

Victoria Day Program loaded the hampers up in their van, filling every nook and cranny, before heading out for their deliveries. We would not have had such a successful experience without the help of these two programs!

Aside from the Quest hampers, we were very fortunate to receive donated hampers from two generous donors, Cause We Care and St. George's School. These hampers included gift cards and household products. Overall, we were able to provide a hamper to 46 families.

**All the best to you  
and your family in 2024!**



# CHINESE NEW YEAR WITH HENRY YAO

**BY ZOE LEI & RATNAM MATHUR**

DDA and some of its residents celebrated the Chinese New Year Celebration and Calligraphy Exhibition at the Richmond Public Library. The traditional calligraphy was taught by Mr. Yao from the Hai Pai Art Academy who invited his entire class to participate in the event.

Member of Parliament Wilson Mayo, MLAs Henry Yao, and Michael Lee, along with the Mayor of Richmond Malcolm Brodie, also attended the event. They were pleased to see Curzon residents engaging in calligraphy, exchanging symbols of blessing and good fortune.



With over 200 Vancouver residents present, the event garnered support for community diversity and culture, fostering the enjoyment of Chinese New Year. Since 2023, Curzon residents have been students of Mr. Yao, making the experience of learning Chinese calligraphy and attending the event truly enjoyable.



# \$10-A-DAY CHILD CARE - DDA IS ALL IN



As of February 1st, 2024 all of DDA's eligible Child Development Centres (CDCs) can now offer the much anticipated \$10-a-day child care program! That means seven of our eight locations are now under ChildCareBC's initiative to make child care affordable for families in the Lower Mainland.

Berwick CDC, Playhouse CDC, Champlain CDC and Kid's in General CDC joined our other sites Fraserview, Riverside and Creekside – which started the program in 2022, as \$10-a-day sites.

One of the main benefits of the program for BC families is to have access to high quality, inclusive, flexible child care with fees capped at \$10-a-day, with professional wages, benefits, and healthy working conditions for early Childcare Educators (ECEs).

*“Our growth in childcare is limited only by our access to qualified ECE employees,” says DDA's Executive Director Alanna Hendren. “Our families will only pay a maximum of two hundred a month for any of our child care spaces. Previously a full-time space was almost 13 hundred per month, a tremendous savings and affordability for our families.”*

Being part of \$10 a day also ensures secure funding for our child care programs and all wage increases from our bargained collective agreement are fully funded by the MECC going forward. Also, being a selected applicant we must ensure to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all children, including children with extra support needs, which is part of the selection process for all recipients receiving ongoing provincial child care funding.

The selection and application process was an arduous one, which required individual submissions and resubmissions for each site over 2-3 month period by DDA's Finance and Child and Youth teams. Also, the City of Vancouver provided letters of support and confirmation of partnership to assist in this process. We feel though it was a long and at times frustrating process it was well worth it as the benefits certainly out-weigh the difficulties - for our families and child care programs.



# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Every year on December 3rd it's declared the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The world-wide initiative has been promoted by the United Nations since 1992. The day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities. The City of Vancouver was among many municipalities across the country to proclaim December 3rd the official Day of Persons with Disabilities. DDA's Assistant Director of Residential Services, Tasia Alexis (6th from left) was at last year's proclamation at Vancouver City Hall along with the Mayor of Vancouver, Ken Sim, City Councillors, and the City's Accessibility Planner, Karen Lai. We look forward to another proclamation later this year in support of disabilities around the world.

## SCIENCE WORLD VISITS CREEKSIDE

DDA's outdoor adventure preschool and 3-5 years full-day child care at Creekside Child Development Centre welcomed the return of Science World's Outreach program led by Early Childhood Education practicum students from Langara College. The children and staff participated in fun activities such as creating shadows through explorations with shadow boxes and flashlights.

It was a hit! The children are looking forward to the next visit with these awesome future ECEs. We are very lucky to have community partners like Science World!



# THE TAYLOR SWIFT ERAS TOUR MOVIE

**WRITTEN BY MARIE PUTMAN IN COLLABORATION WITH JULIE, DAWN, JANET, DANIELLA, AND ZOANNE**

If you haven't heard of Taylor Swift, then you must not be in touch with today's pop culture. Taylor Swift is a pop musician (Icon) who has won many awards and accolades. Currently she is touring the globe with her Eras Tour to sold-out stadiums of fans known as 'Swifties'.

It is the highest grossing tour to date by any female musical artist securing her a spot in the Billionaire's Club!

If you are one the lucky ones to secure a ticket you will experience a journey expanding through all of her musical eras for 3.5 hours and 44 songs. The tour started on March 2023, and will end Dec 8th here in Vancouver!

For those who may not be a lucky ticket holder, Swift put out a concert movie for anyone and everyone to have the opportunity to experience her show.

On October 13th, Marie, Julie, Zoanne, and Daniella went on opening night all dressed up to have a concert experience in the theatre. The ladies danced and sang whenever the urge came about.



Zoanne said she loves the music it makes her feel happy. Daniella said her favorite song is Shake It Off!! She also loved all of the flashy sequined outfits worn during the concert. Julie loved going up to the front of the theatre to dance.

Janet Dirks went to the movie on another night and said she had a really great time and would encourage everyone to go and see the movie if they had the opportunity.

Dawn went to the movie and loved both the music and seeing that Taylor is a fellow lover of sequins like her. "I loved the Sparkle on her."

Marie said all of her fans that went to the concert had fun with their cell phones lighting up the Stadium and being there would have been the chance of a lifetime.

Julie remembered seeing Taylor in concert many years ago with her mom and said Taylor is an amazing artist.

Well, Julie, I think the whole world agrees with you!!!

"I loved  
the Sparkle  
on her."



# FROM DDA'S ENCOURAGING ABILITIES PODCAST

## STAFF PROFILE: RATNAM MATHUR

The Developmental Disabilities Association is always on the lookout for really good staff members. We seek people who have a strong sense of giving back to the community and have a calling to help others. One such DDA team member is Ratnam Mathur, manager of our Curzon group home. She began her career helping refugees in Germany after earning a master's in commerce. However, she gave up a career in high finance to follow her heart, which involved continuing to work in the caregiving field. Ratnam is featured in our latest podcast with DDA communications Manager, Evan Kelly.



An excerpt from the podcast:

**Evan:** You got to Canada and you wanted to keep working in this field. What is your education and expertise?

**Ratnam:** I have done my Masters in Commerce. All my education is done in India. I tell my kids, that you never know what you want to be. In Boston, I worked in a bank, but still I wanted to continue the work I did in Germany working with a social worker, and that was it.

**Evan:** Why is this line of work important to you?

**Ratnam:** I have always found that working with people with developmental disabilities is deeply satisfying to me. I want to be their voice where they don't always have one. To help them think positively that they do have the potential to learn new things. To be happy and explore everything in life. Fills me with great satisfaction.

**Evan:** Tell me about the people at Curzon.

**Ratnam:** All are very loving and full of life. Music, dancing, and partying are what they like. Playing sports. But they all have big hearts to give back to the community. Always ready to help others. They are always ready and willing to help out in their own way.

You can hear the entire podcast at:

<https://communicationsz8.podbean.com/e/vital-people-a-career-in-caregiving-at-dda/>

# JOBS WEST SUCCESS

Kevin Joined Jobs West in Summer of 2022, looking for volunteer and paid work. He came to Jobs West with several accomplishments under his belt and a track record of over ten years as a volunteer dishwasher with the Salvation Army. However, Kevin wanted to find something paid and more permanent to reflect his passion and commitment to the culinary industry. His Employment Specialist worked with him to secure a seasonal part-time paid role as a Server Assistant at Nat Bailey Stadium. Kevin loved this role and thrived at work. He was popular, successful and when the contract ended was even more passionate about finding a permanent paid role.

Next, Kevin and his Employment Specialist set to work on increasing his skills, taking additional training and navigating the job market to find the perfect position for him. After several applications and interviews, in December 2023 his Employment Specialist found a part-time role as a dishwasher with Meinhardt's Fine Foods. Given the strength of his new resume, Kevin was offered an interview and trial shift straight away. During his trial he impressed the employer so much that he was hired on the spot! The initial salary was increased to reflect his skills and experience.

Kevin now works three days a week and is a valued member of Meinhardt's team, while still maintaining his volunteer job. His Employment Specialist attended his first few shifts with him to help him with the onboarding process and to ensure that he was getting what he needed at work. His shift pattern was altered slightly to ensure his abilities met the employer's needs, and now after two months at work, he is beginning to grow and learn in his exciting new role.

Kevin's story is a reminder of how crucial patience, perseverance and composure are to finding the right job. In celebrating Kevin's success, we can also celebrate the transformative power of customized employment in turning aspirations into reality. This story is testimony to the fact that, with the right support, people with developmental disabilities can overcome barriers, find the right job and build a future filled with promise.



# TECH REVIEWS

BY KEEGAN NEWBERRY

## Product Summary

The **Runtz Ball Chair** is advertised as a "unique seating option that helps to encourage active movement." It was designed for use primarily by children with sensory and self-regulation needs but can easily be adapted for use by adults.

~ \$325.00 CND



## Highlights

- Able to adjust for a 13.5" or 17" height to accommodate a range of different users; Available in 5 colours with durable fabric covering.
- Low clearance making it possible to use at most desks, allowing the user to move and bounce without restrictions.
- Solid construction and stays still during use to prevent falls common with other ball-type chair designs.
- Maintains inflation even with active, heavy use to ensure consistent sensory feedback for the user.
- Comfortable seating.

## Lowlights

- Assembly can be a bit challenging, though clear instructions are provided.
- A limited range of high adjustments may prevent use by very tall/short users; Though high value, the cost is significantly higher than other ball chairs on the market.

## Last Word

The Runtz Ball Chair is an ideal option for users who best regulate through proprioceptive, kinesthetic, and vestibular stimulation. Works well to help users maintain focus during seated activities and can also be used as a tool for sensory regulation breaks. Though priced higher than similar items, it is high value and a worthwhile expense.

## Star ratings

<i>Ease of Use:</i> Simple Instructions Helpful	★★★★☆
<i>Adaptability:</i> Some Personalization Possible	★★★★☆
<i>Accessibility:</i> Broad Range of Users Served	★★★★☆
<i>Cost vs. Value:</i> Worthwhile Expense	★★★★☆
<i>Overall Rating:</i>	★★★★☆

free  
event



Developmental  
Disabilities Association



# SAVE THE DATE LEISURE FAIR 2024!

Explore Lower Mainland recreation activities  
for children and youth with disabilities.

**WHERE:** Sunset Community Centre (Gym)

6810 main Street, Vancouver, BC, V5X 0A1

**WHEN:** Tuesday, April 2nd, 2024

**FROM:** 5.30pm to 7.30pm



FACEBOOK  
@LEISURE FAIR

# NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBE NOW

SUBSCRIBE



Developmental  
Disabilities Association

Sign up on our website to get our latest news and updates delivered directly to your inbox!

**SUBSCRIBE AT [WWW.DEVELOP.BC.CA/NEWSLETTERS/SUBSCRIBE](http://WWW.DEVELOP.BC.CA/NEWSLETTERS/SUBSCRIBE)**



@DDA604



@DEVELOPDDA



@DDA604

SUITE 100 - 3851 SHELL ROAD, RICHMOND, BC CANADA V6X 2W2

Canadian Publication Agreement Number 40011236

The Star is a quarterly external publication of the Developmental Disabilities Association.

We welcome your comments and feedback. Kindly direct all comments and submissions to [communications@develop.bc.ca](mailto:communications@develop.bc.ca).