



Abiona Centre

For Infant & Early Mental Health

Formerly Massey Centre and Humewood House

A young child with dark hair, wearing a red dress with white polka dots and an orange headband with white polka dots, is walking on a sandy beach. The child is holding hands with an adult whose legs and hands are visible. The adult is wearing a pink and white patterned outfit. The background shows a clear blue sky and the ocean. The child is looking down at the sand.

New Lives Newsletter


Summer 2023 edition

Meet the author!

Hi, my name is Nimrah and I am a young mom living at Abiona Centre. I am very grateful for all the support my son and I have received through the centre. It truly has changed our lives! The services, the support, and the encouragement from staff have allowed me to continue to care for and provide for my son full-time. I also gained the confidence to follow my dream of becoming a journalist. I am looking forward to graduating in the spring of 2024.

I am currently working on building my portfolio and I thought I could give back by sharing some of the events and stories at Abiona Centre through the lens of the dedicated staff to the young mothers trying to create a better life for their children. I am extremely honored to be a part of this season's newsletter, and I am hopeful you will find something that is indulge-worthy in the articles or even through some of my personal writings that I hope to share soon.

Thank you to my Abiona Family!
Love All, Nimrah.

Want to follow my work? Connect with me on LinkedIn 
www.linkedin.com/in/khan-nimrah



Thank you to the Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation!

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to the Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation for their remarkable generosity and unwavering support of the Prenatal Live-In Treatment program and Transitional Housing programs at Abiona Centre. Thanks to their philanthropic commitment, we are able to provide vital resources and comprehensive care to young moms and their children, empowering them to build brighter futures.



AUBREY & MARLA DAN
FOUNDATION

The foundation's steadfast dedication to our cause has had a profound impact on the lives of countless young moms, offering hope, stability, and a nurturing environment during a critical phase of their lives. We are immensely grateful for the Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation's partnership and their remarkable contributions to our community.



Abiona Centre Graduation and Commencement Ceremony

Written by: Nimrah, a young mom at Abiona Centre

Celebrating student achievements!

On June 22nd, Abiona Centre hosted its first in-person graduation and commencement ceremony to celebrate student achievements since June 2019. The event provided the students with a feeling of normalcy, inspiration, and pride in their academic and non-academic achievements.

This year, the centre celebrated a total of 53 credits earned by students at both Humewood and Broadview campuses, and three graduates. The graduates have been accepted into college programs for the coming fall semester.

"It's my favorite day of the year. It's the best feeling to see you guys work so hard in school. You are moms who have busy lives outside of school, and just being able to come and get your work done and accomplish this as moms with your babies, it's the best thing." said Sophie, School Counsellor.

"Seeing students be more social, come together, socialize, become friends, and learn more about each other, help each other with parenting or other outside school issues has been really great to see," said Sophie. She also said that in-person classes allowed the students to have more of a sense of community and belonging.

It is a very exciting time for young mothers to receive recognition for their personal academic growth including Leah, a current student. **"I feel very proud of myself and I feel very accomplished and I feel like all my hard work is paying off,"** said Leah. Leah is looking forward to graduating next year.

"I am so proud of our young people. I am so proud of the young people on their way to graduation. I feel when students succeed, I succeed" said Rownak, Vice-Principal of Education Community Partnership Programs. Rownak shared some advice for young mothers pursuing their education.

"Hold on and keep going." Even when it gets hard. It's ok to slow down, to stop, to ask for help, to cry, to feel overwhelmed. These are all human emotions. What is important is the things you are holding on to are what make your journey amazing. Hold on. Every day you hold on, it will get easier."



**Thank you for making our 2023
Graduation and Commencement
Ceremony amazing!**



Valedictorian Speech

"It's an honor to speak on behalf of the class of 2023.

It's been a hard and long journey getting here. I, like many of you, had to overcome many barriers to get here. I didn't always think I would be able to do it. There were many moments when I was unmotivated and didn't believe in myself. With the help of the teachers, Kadri and Karlos, who always supported, motivated, and uplifted me, I was able to learn to believe in myself again. I also want to thank the CYWs who supported me during my school years: Cindy, Jessica, and Sophie.

They were caring, encouraging and always made sure I was supported and had a voice. If it weren't for a flexible school program like this with lots of support to help with school and things like housing and budgeting, I honestly don't know where I would be right now. I am so grateful for Abiona.

Everyone here should be proud of how far they have come. Being a young mom is hard, especially when so much of the world looks down on us. Some people may not believe in us, but if I can do it, you can do it. It doesn't matter if it takes a little longer, just work towards your goals and you can do anything. Don't let anyone tell you you can't. All of this is setting a great example for your child and helping you create a better life and future for you both.

Congratulations everyone! Here's to success and bettering yourself for a brighter future."

-Zahraa

Class of 2023 Valedictorian



Celebrating Diversity at Abiona Centre

Written by: Nimrah, a young mom at Abiona Centre

National Indigenous Peoples Day

On June 21, the EarlyON at Abiona Centre hosted its sixth National Indigenous Peoples Day event.

In the past few years, there were a lot of restrictions due to Covid. The event only had clients and staff and there was social distancing. This year it was open to the community and everyone got to socialize and be more involved.

"It's important to celebrate Indigenous People's Day because this is their land and for centuries we completely ignored and dismissed the fact that we were on stolen land and it's about time we acknowledge it as a whole," says Xeena, Volunteer Coordinator.

The Broadview Campus childcare centre painted an Every Child Matters flag and Medicine Wheel on the parking lot. It was led by Melyssa, the Childcare Supervisor.

"Inclusivity and Diversity at the centre means respecting everyone and welcoming them just as they are, no matter where they come from." Chantelle, EarlyON Coordinator. The centre prides itself and finds it very important to provide services to clients from all different backgrounds, cultures, and races.

Chantelle said there were a lot of people that showed up right when the event opened which usually doesn't happen.

"This year everyone came out from the community and were ready to mingle. The kids get to run around. There's no distance between the children. Not many restrictions like the last few years of Covid."

Stella, an EarlyON program participant, said that the celebration was great! She and her kids enjoyed getting outside and meeting new people.



"I see kids playing, I see parents socializing, I see kids laughing, and it's just nice to see. So it's nice that people are having fun today." Stephanie, Early Literacy Specialist.



Celebrating Diversity at Abiona Centre

Written by: Nimrah, a young mom at Abiona Centre

Abiona Centre shows its Pride!

On June the, EarlyON Child and Family Program held its annual Pride celebration. The event was originally planned as a barbeque but due to the air pollution caused by the forest fires, the outdoor celebration was quickly moved indoors at the EarlyON room at Abiona Centre.

"We are an inclusive organization. We care about our community, we care about our people and we care about diversity," said Jessica, EarlyON Coordinator

The atmosphere at the EarlyON room drew in smiles and conversations. The centre was grateful to have volunteers from the Leaside Rotary Club helping grill up delicious food for the event.

"It's going great so far! We've got lots of people here, we've got staff, people from the community, residents. It would be nice to be outside and not inside due to the forest fires and air pollution. But everyone's health and safety comes first obviously. We would rather be inside than have to cancel everything." said Jessica.

"It's amazing and I love it", said Amanda, Child and Youth Worker, "It shows a lot of inclusivity, and it's just a happy feeling"

Amanda says a lot of new people came out to the event and just seeing the kids happy and having fun is nice. Everyone is showing their support by wearing pride outfits.

Melyssa, Childcare Supervisor led an initiative to paint a Progress Pride flag on the Broadview Campus parking lot. The event received a warm welcome from the community who even stopped to pitch in with painting and snap pictures.





Mom's celebrating moms

The young moms at our transitional housing program near Jane and Sheppard planned and hosted a fabulous self-care event to celebrate Mother's Day. They offered free services like manicures and hand massages to each other. In the evening, there was a pizza dinner party , along with sweet treats for the young moms and their children. Two \$25 gift cards were also given away through a raffle. The event brought happiness and unity for the young moms living in this program, creating lasting memories.

Working in partnership for fire safety!

Written by: Kyla and Nadia, Community Workers

This month the Baby and Me: Our Home program successfully hosted the "Code RED" workshop in collaboration with the Greater Toronto Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and Toronto Fire Services. The main aim of the workshop was to educate participants about fire safety, prevention, detection, and how to escape in case of a fire. Our clients, many of whom are experiencing independent living for the first time, showed great interest and participation in the workshop.

The workshop covered a wide range of topics and provided valuable information to our clients. They learned important skills such as how to safely use small appliances and electronics, understand evacuation procedures specific to their building, and recognize the significance of having tenant insurance. This knowledge equips our clients with the necessary tools to ensure their safety in their apartments.

One of the highlights of the event was our guest speaker, Michelle John, who was the first female employee of Brampton Fire & Emergency Services. Michelle's presence and words had a profound impact on our clients, especially the black youth whom we primarily assist. Her story of immigrating from Trinidad & Tobago in 1978 served as a tremendous source of inspiration and motivation.



Cooking Program:

Cheesy Spinach Stuffed Chicken Breast Recipe

This month our young moms at Jane and Sheppard transitional housing program learned how to make Cheesy Spinach Stuffed Chicken Breast. Why not give the recipe a try at home?

This recipe serves 6 if you cut the stuffed chicken breasts in half.

Cost to Make: \$10-\$12

For the Filling:

- 3 large chicken breasts, boneless, skinless (1 3/4 to 2 lbs, even-sized pieces)
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- 1 1/2 Tbsp olive oil
- 4 oz cream cheese, cold
- 1 Tbsp mayonnaise
- 2 garlic cloves, pressed
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 1/2 cups baby spinach leaves, chopped
- 1/4 cup mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese



1. Preheat oven to 425°F with a rack in the center. In a mixing bowl, mash together cream cheese, mayo, and garlic with a fork then stir in mozzarella, parmesan, and chopped spinach leaves until combined.

2. Lay chicken on a flat surface and cut slit 3/4 of the way through without cutting all the way through. Stuff each chicken breast with 1/3 of the mixture and seal horizontally with a toothpick (make sure the chicken breast can lay flat on the sides for searing).

3. Season the outside of the chicken breast all over with 3/4 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp pepper, 1/2 tsp garlic powder, and 1/2 tsp paprika, or season to taste.

4. Heat 1 1/2 Tbsp olive oil in an oven-proof pan such as cast iron, or large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat. Add chicken and sauté for 4 minutes per side until golden brown on each side. 5. Flip a second time and immediately transfer the skillet to preheated oven. Bake at 425°F for 10-15 minutes until thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the chicken registers at 165°F.

Rest chicken 5 minutes before slicing. Spoon pan juices over chicken to serve.

It's so much fun learning a new recipe every week. My son and I both look forward to the classes.



Save the Date!

Eat **4** Eight

Teen Mom Budget Challenge

October 11, 2023

Take the challenge and help raise vital funds for programs that support young moms and their babies.

Dont miss out on updates.
You can sign up for the
challenge today at
abionacentre.ca/eat4eight

Or scan the
QR code with
your phone!



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