



## Young Children have a Deep Capacity to Care and Contribute

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Our youngest citizens are not often honoured for making a difference in a community, or for lending a helping hand. Volunteerism and charity work is a sphere largely occupied by adults, or by teens in need of compulsory “community service hours”. But London Bridge has come to understand that children, when given the opportunity, can work together and make meaningful contributions. We see this happen regularly, as highlighted by our “Kids Helping Kids” event.

“Kids Helping Kids” is an annual walkathon hosted by all fourteen London Bridge Early Childhood Learning Centres. It was born almost thirty years ago - a result of two experiences. The first was a London Bridge family receiving a childhood cancer diagnosis; the second was Educators brainstorming with children on ways to help support this family.

The walkathon itself was a simple, thoughtful idea that lives on. Children collect donations to help fight against a devastating disease, and over the years thousands of dollars have been raised for ChildCan and the Ronald McDonald House. On walkathon day children across London, Huron County, and Sarnia proudly walk as a group and carry signs, declaring to our communities how these are “Kids Helping Kids”.

Each year we prepare for the walkathon by creating signs and talking with the children about why they

are going on a special walk. The kids are always very curious and pose questions about the children they are raising money for. They ask, “Do they have to get a needle”? Many wonder, “Are they in the hospital”? But most of all the children are anxious to help. “I’m going to make money for the sick kids”, children declare. They use their own experience with illness, recalling perhaps that “my sister was sick”, or “I was in the hospital when I was sick”. In doing this they begin to put themselves in another’s shoes. This is an extraordinary skill that will serve them well throughout life.

We delight in the capability that children have to show kindness and concern for each other. We are moved by their displays of caring. We regularly see moments throughout the day where children demonstrate empathy and nurturing with each other. They may comfort another child who is sad by bringing them their favourite toy, or by sitting beside them and rubbing their backs. We admire their helpful attitudes, ranging from offers to wipe tables after lunch, to helping tie a friend’s shoe. These are the values and practices that as Educators we want to notice and nurture.

At London Bridge we really see “Kids Helping Kids” as a daily occurrence, not just an annual event. By recognizing and honouring small acts of caring we reinforce with children that they are contributing members of a community who make a difference.

## Relationships

Learning happens best when children are engaged in something that is of interest to them and when they are with people that they love and trust. Close relationships are an integral part of learning. Children need to feel safe before they can experiment with ideas and engage in complex play. When children form strong emotional attachments to others they can develop the footing they need to confront challenges and they can be free to discover more about themselves and those around them.



*Partners in learning with families and children*

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Angela Woodburn, RECE  
 Tammy Johnson, MLIS