

# Building strong families together

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“My son sometimes pushed all my buttons,” one mother says. “He got into everything, he spoke loudly nonstop, and sometimes it felt like he didn’t listen at all. I didn’t get a break. When I was really frustrated, I sometimes felt like I was channeling my mother—and that’s not how I wanted to parent.”

Parenting isn’t easy. When we’re tired, frustrated, or are just having a bad day, we reach for the tools we have—often the ones our parents passed on to us, which can include yelling, put-downs and punishments. Even when we have a full toolbox to work from, we all experience challenges and we can all use support.

In Dufferin, many parents live at a distance from their families, and many commute out of the area for work. Many families—15 percent, according to the 2011 Canadian census—are single-parent households. As a result, they lack local support, and that makes the parenting role even tougher.

Dufferin Parent Support Network (DPSN) came together in 1999 to fill an identified gap in support for parents of school-aged children. Studies show that ineffective parenting is a 10 times greater predictor of at-risk behaviour (such as substance use) than socio-economic factors. By supporting parents, DPSN helps kids in Dufferin grow up to be productive adults and well-rounded community members.

DPSN offers general parenting information, referrals to community resources, family education and community presentations. A series of free parenting workshops is offered each spring and fall to anyone who interacts with children, including parents, caregivers, grandparents, coaches and teachers. This year’s spring lineup includes popular workshops such as Raising Your Spirited Child, Siblings without Rivalry, and Anger, Parenting and You, as well as some new ones that we’ve developed in response to the needs of families in the community. These include:

- Healthy Eating for the Busy Family (Even Those with Picky Eaters)
- Schoolwork Strategies: Help Your Child Find Success at School
- Relationship Dynamics, which is a follow-up to the fall presentation, Advocating from Strength
- Alyson Schafer: Honey, I Wrecked the Kids on Weds. May 6.

DPSN thrives—despite a small budget and limited paid staff time (one part-time coordinator)—through its team of dedicated, passionate volunteers, which includes its board of directors. They know firsthand how important parenting support is.

As a non-profit organization, DPSN relies on grants and donations, including the generous support of United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin and Dufferin County. In addition, DPSN partners with local organizations such as Dufferin Child and Family Services, Ontario Early Years Centre, Kerry’s Place, John Howard Society, Wellington County Learning Centre and others to provide relevant parenting materials, workshops, and special events.

The Amaranth Lions’ Club is providing funding through its calendar sales to support this spring’s special presentation, Alyson Schafer: Honey, I Wrecked the Kids, based on her best-selling book.

In addition, DPSN is hosting a family event at Jungle Oasis on Saturday, Feb. 14 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thanks to sponsorship from Fifth Avenue Dental and The Grime Team, admission is only \$5 per child, with all proceeds funding DPSN’s mission of providing support to parents in Dufferin County.

Watch for the workshop schedules that come home with primary school students and are posted on our website at [www.dpsn.ca](http://www.dpsn.ca). You can also get more information by calling (519) 940-8678.