

Tuxedo Community Centre Preschool
Engaging and Growing Young Minds
by
Brian Campbell

Tuxedo Community Centre is a hidden gem in the neighbourhood, located on Southport Boulevard, just across Corydon Avenue from Tuxedo Park Shopping Centre. Board member, Lynn Riddell has been part of the Tuxedo Community Centre Board for over 15 years and estimates that it has been running for over 30 years. Tuxedo Community Centre features many of the programs that you would naturally expect in a community centre; sports programs such as baseball, soccer, basketball and, of course, hockey. It also features a Karate Club and Yogakids and a variety of seasonal events throughout the year.

What makes it stand out, though, is the Tuxedo Community Centre Preschool, a licenced preschool that runs under the direction of the Centre. The preschool offers programs for children from ages one to four, with ages one and two on the lower level, and three and four on the main floor. The lower level programs are for parents to come out with their children and give both parents and children a chance to socialize with others. The main floor programs are broken into three and four-year-old groups running on alternate days and are designed to prepare children for kindergarten.

Director, Liz Dryden, lights up when she talks about the people she works with. She says, “I absolutely love working here, and part of the reason are the people I work with. We are a group of very dedicated women who have been here for a length of time. We are very passionate and we care deeply for the children and the families in the community.” They get a lot of repeat families as often siblings come through the preschool and the parents volunteer and work alongside the staff.

Both Liz and Lynn are obviously very passionate about the preschool program. Lynn started out as a parent bringing her sons and now works as board liaison to the preschool. The program is so popular that many parents ask to continue volunteering even after their children have grown out of the preschool.

The staff turnover is very minimal. Liz has been with Tuxedo Preschool for over seven years and most of the staff has been there as long or longer than she has. Liz

says, “We are a team. We all offer different strengths to the program and we work with those strengths. We support each other, and we absolutely adore and love working with the children.”

The facility is beautifully set up, designed with preschool children in mind, with child-sized washrooms connected directly to the main room and everything is completely self-contained. When weather permits, the gated outdoor play area is connected directly out the back door. Liz says, “It caters to the needs of the children and allows the teachers to be creative when designing and implementing their play based programming and hands on learning.”

Tuxedo Community Centre Preschool is a licenced program and the fees are regulated and affordable and can be subsidized. Registration is in February and their open house is on Thursday, February 5th, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. coinciding this year with the Tuxedo Community Centre Winter Carnival and Hockey Tournament, so if you are coming for one, you can check out the other. To register your child or to find out more, go to their website at www.tuxedocc.ca.