



As seen in...



Nearly fifty years ago, young reporter Lucy Daniels reviewed children's books for the News and Observer. How fitting that today, the center that bears her name and is the product of her generous philanthropy is celebrating the first anniversary of its own Lucy's Book Club with its Bookmarked! event.



While many parenting topics are hotly debated, the value of reading to your children is rarely one of them. Whether you're looking at statistics, studies or success records in school, the benefit of reading to children early on is clear.

Not only is reading time an indicator of future literacy skills, but it also boosts an understanding of concepts and vocabulary. It is one of the ways children learn to express and label their emotions, resolve conflict and communicate.

So when the Lucy Daniels Center for Early Childhood, a center devoted to promoting the healthy emotional development of young children, was searching for a way to give a gift to the community, launching Lucy's Book Club made sense.

BY ILLYSE LANE

marked for success



At the Lucy Daniels Center, teachers use reading as a fundamental tool in teaching children how to express and label their emotions, resolve conflict and communicate.

TEACHING THROUGH READING

Lucy's Book Club encourages parents to read to their children to promote a lifelong love of reading and explore topics relevant to the challenges of everyday life. By providing parents with a list of recommended children's books and related adult selections, the Lucy Daniels Center is able to reach beyond the children it serves through its programs and extend into the community, offering support to all parents.

"We're sitting on so much incredible information that can help parents be proactive," says Joyce Watkins King, Director of Development. "Lucy's Book Club offers another avenue to reach parents whose children may never come here, but still want information about the typical challenges of raising kids."

SIMPLE BEGINNINGS, SIMPLE MISSION

Collecting all of this information started nearly 20 years ago, when the Center began as an offshoot of the Lucy Daniels Foundation. The Foundation was the vision of Raleigh native Lucy Daniels, Ph.D., a local writer and clinical psychologist interested in studying the intersection between creativity and psychology in adults.

Daniels and Dr. Donald Rosenblitt, current Clinical and Executive Director of the Center, worked together to develop a preschool that would support the emotional development of a wide range of children, including those with significant emotional difficulties, those with milder emotional challenges and those who were developing fairly typically. "We were building upon a tradition that had demonstrated the power of working with children in an educationally based setting on a daily basis in close partnerships with their parents," says Dr. Rosenblitt.

In 1991, the first Early Intervention classroom opened. Today, the Center is thriving, seeing over 500 children a year through three channels, making it the largest non-profit provider of mental health services in the Triangle exclusively for children.

And Dr. Rosenblitt is quick to dismiss the inaccurate stereotype that the Center assists only those children with severe emotional issues. "We work with children across the spectrum, from those whose parents need a little guidance with temporary issues to children whose development is being significantly impacted by their emotional challenge," says Dr. Rosenblitt.

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Through Lucy's Book Club and its Bookmarked! event, parents in the community have access to a vast selection of books that are not only enjoyable for children, but also help guide their child's social and emotional growth.

REACHING OUT IN MANY WAYS

Today, the original Early Intervention Program (EIP) exists alongside the Child Enrichment Program (CEP), a model preschool for typically developing children. "It is extremely valuable to have these two tracks, offering our teachers opportunities for training," says King.

Parents also see the value. One mother with a son in the EIP and a daughter in the CEP has been overwhelmed by the

support the Center provides as well as the way the teachers have encouraged independence and a feeling of security within both of her children. Additionally, knowing her son is helped on a daily basis has been priceless. "He's alive again, he smiles more and he's found positive coping mechanisms that help him when he's anxious," she says.

For Karen Taylor, the CEP was the closest NAEYC-accredited preschool in her area. Although it required a slightly longer drive for her daughter, Taylor felt it was well worth it. "With the help of her teachers, my daughter developed the ability to talk about positive and negative feelings, sort out misunderstandings and respect other's wishes," says Taylor.

The Center also offers SecurePath, a home-based program offered in conjunction with Wake County's SmartStart initiative, and the Family Guidance Service, which began as the Center recognized the need to continue assisting those preschoolers transitioning to elementary school. This outpatient program also happens to be the Center's largest, serving children up to age 11, and is an option for any child, regardless if they attended the EIP.

“The Family Guidance Service made a significant difference for my son who was struggling with anger management issues,” says a father. Through therapy, his son learned strategies for dealing with his anger, while he and his wife learned how to avoid certain interactions that led their son to lose control of his temper.

“It was a complete collaborative effort,” he says. “It also taught us there’s no shame for us as parents or for our son as a patient to reach out and get help.”

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

Regardless of the program, reading is a fundamental tool used for helping children learn. Enter Lucy’s Book Club, which reinforces the importance of reading to children to help guide their social and emotional growth.

Three times a year, a panel made up of teachers, mental health professionals and two Wake County librarians choose 10 children’s books and one related parenting book to be featured as book club selections. The chosen books relay a message and validate emotions, and have included topics such as healthy parent child attachment, imagination and exploring independence.

The book club has over 220 partners throughout the Triangle, including pediatricians, dentists, speech therapists and preschools, who participate by displaying the book club selections on oversized bookmarks – broken out by category and age – making it easy for parents to create their own library of enjoyable books that teach important life lessons while building confidence.

The Lucy’s Book Club website is also critical to this initiative, containing a wealth of information in an easy-to-use format where articles about the featured topics can be downloaded. “The goal is to end up with a very rich site where parents can get information,” says King.

BOOKMARKED! A CELEBRATION OF READING WITH CHILDREN

To celebrate its first year, Lucy’s Book Club is hosting Bookmarked!, a two-week event beginning Saturday, May 22nd. The event will include celebrity book readings from local heroes such as mail carriers, firemen and policemen, held at various locations, and a Lucy’s Book Club selection book fair held at Quail Ridge Books. The event will wrap up with a special fundraising event with Judith Viorst, the best selling author of the beloved Alexander series on Sunday, June 6th. Viorst will also read from her Alexander books on Saturday and hold a book signing.

“We hope that Bookmarked! will make more parents aware of Lucy’s Book Club as an educational resource for them and their young children. We also hope it will raise awareness of the mental health and educational services provided by the Center and help us attract new partners, individuals and corporations in our community who feel passionate about supporting children and their emotional well-being,” says King.

For reading may be the most powerful vehicles we have in helping to raise emotional and mentally secure children. And the Lucy Daniels Center has made it easy for all of us to enjoy it. ♦

For more information about Bookmarked! and Lucy’s Book Club, visit www.lucysbookclub.org. For more information on the Lucy Daniels Center, visit www.lucydanielscenter.org.

Lucy’s Book Club presents Bookmarked!

A celebration of reading with children.
Saturday, May 22nd through Sunday, June 6th.

Featuring activities for all ages, including a special evening with Judith Viorst, renowned author of books for children and adults.

Lucy’s Book Club Book Fair at Quail Ridge Books featuring all 44 of the Lucy’s Book Club titles. Select titles from Judith Viorst will also be available from Quail Ridge Books for special book-signing events.

Celebrity Heroes Book Readings for Children and Parents at venues such as public libraries, Quail Ridge Books, Girls and Boys Clubs, YMCAs, preschools, kindergartens and the Lucy Daniels Center to share stories and fun activities with children. On Saturday, May 29th, join us on the Commons at North Hills during the Farmer’s Market for two readings, one at 10am and one at 11am.

An Evening with Judith Viorst, a fundraising event, will be held Sunday, June 6th, in Kenan Recital Hall at Peace College in Raleigh. In addition to her lecture, “Loves, Losses, and Wicked Thoughts,” and a brief program, guests will have an opportunity to meet Ms. Viorst at a reception in her honor in the Main Hall parlor and adjacent courtyard. Tickets start at \$50 per person and include a \$30 tax-deductible contribution to the Center.

For more information, please visit www.lucysbookclub.org.

