



Press release

The fourth *Naître et grandir* campaign of the
Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation

Books are the best toys!

Montreal, November 8, 2012 – Today, Claude Chagnon, President of the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation, unveiled the fourth phase of the Foundation’s social operation devoted to early childhood development. Mr. Chagnon was accompanied by Nicole Léger, Quebec Families Minister, Lucienne Robillard, Chairman of the Board of *Avenir d’enfants*, Diane Mockle, Chief Executive Officer of the Literacy Foundation, and several other partners. This new phase in the multimedia campaign that was originally launched in October 2009 focuses on the importance of reading in baby development.

Reading books to babies

Although some parents find nothing unusual in the idea of reading to their baby, others are surprised that such young children would be interested in books, assuming that they wouldn’t understand everything their parents were saying. According to a recent study conducted by Léger Marketing, over 50% of parents admitted that they did not read to their baby because of a lack of either time or interest. The experts and partners consulted by the Foundation agree, however, that reading to babies even as young as six months to a year is the activity that contributes the most to their development.

“We know that parents—and even other adults involved in their child’s life—have been encouraged to adopt the actions we feature in our ads,” said Claude Chagnon. “For the fourth phase of our campaign, we decided to focus on reading, one of the greatest contributors to children’s emotional, cognitive and language development, which are all key factors in getting off to a good start in school.” The Foundation’s campaigns, linked to the *Naître et grandir* website and magazine that reach over 230,000 parents every month, are noticed by 70% of the general public and have an appreciation rating of approximately 90%.

According to Julie Brousseau, Ph.D., a psychologist at the Marie Enfant Rehabilitation Centre of the CHU Sainte-Justine who has acted as early childhood expert since the very beginning of the social campaign, there are windows of time during which very young children can very rapidly acquire the essential skills they need for school readiness. “Reading books to babies provides them with many benefits in terms of their intellectual, language, motor, sensory and socio-affective development,” explained Dr. Brousseau.

She went on to say that reading to your baby creates an experience that is rich in many ways. “The intimacy and close contact promotes the child’s emotional development, which will help him make friends later on. Exaggerating the sound of words while letting your baby feel the movements of your lips will help her learn to speak. Letting your baby play with a book—feel it, put it in his mouth, and try to turn the pages—will help him learn to grasp and hold objects and develop the skills he will eventually need to hold a pencil. Reading a book to a baby while showing her the shape of the letters and pointing to the pictures is the perfect way to introduce her to the wonderful world of words and writing,” said Julie Brousseau.

A multi-platform campaign

The Foundation has chosen to step up its presence on several platforms in order to reach parents and the people around them and make them aware of the importance and pleasure in sharing a book with a baby. In addition to the television ads that have been being broadcast since November 5, the *Naître et grandir.com* website offers Internet users fact sheets on the benefits of reading. The February 2013 issue of the magazine *Naître et grandir* will also include a feature article on books as the best toys for our babies. Finally, in the interest of giving a book to every parent who wants one, the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation has joined forces with the Literacy Foundation and its *Gift of Reading* program. “It has been proven that the earlier a child acquires the key to the treasure chest that books represent, the more precious benefits he or she will store away in preparation for the future: starting school, achieving academic success, obtaining a first diploma, and even more,” explained Diane Mockle, Chief Executive Officer of the Literacy Foundation. “Thanks to our partnership with the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation, we will be able to turn on 15,000 little lights in the eyes of children between 0 to 4 living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods throughout Quebec.”

This operation responds to the objectives of the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation, which believes that educational success is a key factor in preventing poverty. “By making parents aware of the extreme importance of encouraging their children’s development at the earliest possible age, we want to give our children every opportunity to get off to a good start at school. Studies have shown us that children who are well prepared for school are those who perform better and progress more smoothly through their academic career,” added Claude Chagnon.

“This campaign complements the significant contributions that the Foundation and the Quebec government have made together,” said Lucienne Robillard, Chair of the Board of *Avenir d’enfants*. “One of those contributions was to set up the *Avenir d’enfants* fund, whose mission is to contribute, through support for the mobilization of local communities, to the overall development of children five and under living in poverty to ensure that every child will have the opportunity to get a good start in life.”

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