

“Dan Offord had a deep concern for what I now call ‘thrown away children’. These children are the flotsam and jetsam of our modern society. No one was ever less moralizing or more practical about what to do to try to change things for the better for them than Dan Offord. How shall we ever find someone to take over his place? One sure way is to draw on the training and experience that exists within the Centre he founded.”

David C. Taylor
Professor Emeritus,
Child Psychiatry
University of
Manchester (England)



New Director Aims To Attract New Talent and Expand the Scope of Offord Centre Research



If Peter Szatmari had his way, every child would grow up healthy and happy, mental health problems would be identified and treated earlier, and more bright, young graduate students would opt for a career in early child development research.

Sound like a tall order? Not if you're the enthusiastic new Director of the Offord Centre for Child Studies.

Dr. Szatmari took over as full-time Director a few months ago, after serving almost a year as Acting Director following the death of founding director Dan Offord in April 2004.

Dr. Szatmari was one of the earliest members of the Offord Centre, teaming up with Dr. Offord in the early '80s to design the first phase of the groundbreaking Ontario Child Health Study, which first pinpointed the scope of children's mental health problems.

Like Dr. Offord, he, too, is a child psychiatrist but his area of expertise is autism, a field in which he has done both clinical work and research for more than 20 years. He was instrumental in developing a regional diagnostic and treatment program for children with autism at Chedoke Child and Family Centre, and last year was appointed the first holder of Canada's only endowed chair in child psychiatry. He currently leads an international collaboration investigating the genetics of autism, as well as a long-term study of autistic pre-schoolers that will try

to identify factors that contribute to positive outcomes for these children.

Dr. Szatmari is only the second person to lead the Offord Centre for Child Studies (formerly known as the Centre for Studies of Children at Risk), and the monumental contribution made by founder Dan Offord is a constant source of inspiration to him. “Dan's role in focusing Canada's, and the world's, attention on the problems of troubled kids was huge,” says Dr. Szatmari. “He believed in the power of positive change, and he knew in his heart as well as from his research and his own personal experiences with kids, that with the right interventions delivered at the right time, a child's life pattern could be altered for the better.”

And that, says Dr. Szatmari, is why the Offord Centre for Child Studies is so important. “We are unique in Canada and the world in the breadth of children's problems that we tackle and in the way we translate this knowledge into practical information that parents, front-line workers and others in the community can use on a day-to-day basis.

“My goal is to continue to expand the Centre's scope to consider child health and development in its broadest sense, to attract talented young researchers from different disciplines and different perspectives, and to be a leading source of up-to-date, rigorous research that can make a difference in the lives of children and families who are struggling with the challenges of living in the 21st century.”

A Million Dollar Celebration!

Donations to children's telethon help fund Dan Offord Chair in Child Studies

The campaign to raise \$2 million for the new Dan Offord Research Chair in Child Studies has passed the halfway point thanks to a commitment of \$1 million from the 2005 McMaster Children's Hospital Celebration.

The funds were raised from individual donations made during the annual Celebration held the first weekend of May, and will be added to contributions already received from a number of long-time Offord Centre friends and volunteers.

A minimum \$2 million is needed to fund the Chair, which will support the research activities of a leading child development scientist. Created to honour the legacy of founding director Dan Offord, the Chair will focus on research near and dear to Dr. Offord's heart.

“Dan was committed to improving the life opportunities of children who, through no fault of their own, are marginalized and disadvantaged,” says Offord Centre director Peter Szatmari.

“This new Chair will continue his efforts to level the playing field for children whose life circumstances put them at a disadvantage, children who come from low-income families, who are living in public housing or unsafe neighbourhoods, who are failing in Grade 1, or who have been abused or neglected.”

New Research Targets Bullying, School Anxiety and More

Bullying, school anxiety and absenteeism, aggression and other problems that impede children's well-being are the focus of new research projects initiated by the Offord Centre.

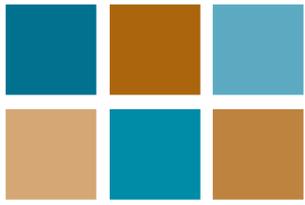
Tracy Vaillancourt has been awarded \$1 million from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to develop a community-based approach to bullying, a problem that affects almost one in three school-aged children. Her pilot project will enlist physicians, teachers, youth workers, policy makers and others in a community-wide effort to develop new strategies to deal with this problem.

Psychiatrist Ellen Lipman has received a \$50,000 Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation/CIBC World Markets Children's Miracle Award to pilot a community-based temper taming program in rural communities. The program, which includes group sessions for both children and their parents, has already proven successful in an

urban setting, reducing aggressive behaviour in children and improving parent-child interaction.

Another study will investigate the causes of school-related anxiety, a problem that keeps as many as five per cent of children out of class on a regular basis. Kathy Bennett, Associate Professor of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, has received a SSHRC grant to conduct this first-ever study designed to improve prevention and early intervention strategies for children who refuse to go to school.

In another first, the Offord Centre has partnered with Voices for Children, an organization dedicated to advancing the well-being of Ontario children and youth, to create Kids Grow Ontario, a province-wide network that will gather and share information about the developmental health of children and youth in Ontario communities. Funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the effort involves several Offord Centre researchers, including Sam Gardner, Magdalena Janus and Cindy Walsh.



Offord CENTRE FOR CHILD STUDIES

Groundbreaking Research Puts Offord Centre on World Map

Ability to predict autism may speed treatment for children

A Canadian research team that includes Lonnie Zwaigenbaum of the Offord Centre has become the first to predict, with remarkable accuracy, whether a child will develop autism.

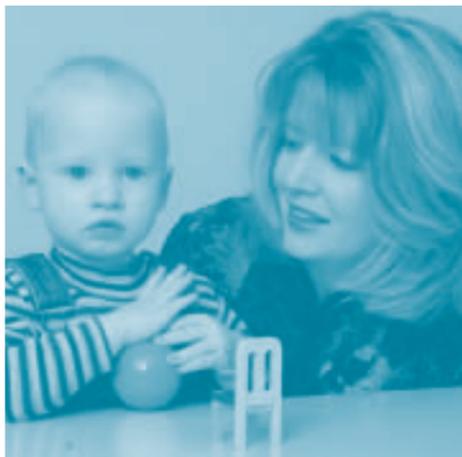
The groundbreaking findings from a study of 200 Canadian infants led by Dr. Zwaigenbaum in Hamilton, Wendy Roberts in Toronto and Susan Bryson in Halifax were published in April, and they've taken the autism world by storm. They even made the cover of Newsweek magazine, where their efforts were described as "some of the most exciting new work" taking place in the field of autism today.

The Canadian study is the largest in the world looking at infant siblings of children who have been diagnosed with autism. Studies show that families with one autistic child have roughly a five to ten percent chance of a second child being diagnosed with autism, a rate of recurrence about 50 times higher than the general population.

"This is groundbreaking work that is pushing the frontier of what we know about the biological nature of autism, and why it emerges so early in life," says Dr. Zwaigenbaum.

"Our hope is that it will lead to the development of new and earlier treatments that could make a huge difference for these children."

Learn more about this study and how you can spot the warning signs of autism. Go to www.offordcentre.com/asd/earlysigs



Jodie Kushnery and her 6-month old son, Landon (above), are participating in groundbreaking Offord Centre research that will help doctors identify autism earlier.

How Much Do You Know About The Offord Centre?

Did you know that one in every five Canadian children has a serious mental health problem?

The Offord Centre for Child Studies directly addresses the needs of these troubled children by conducting research that helps us understand the root causes of major problems like abuse, autism, depression, poverty, difficult families, and more.

We're eager to share that knowledge with parents and families, educators and others who are concerned about the well-being of children.

Join us for a one-hour information session to learn more about who we are and what we do. Includes refreshments and a tour of the Centre.

Call Heather Anderson at 905-521-2100, ext. 44844 to book one of the following dates:

July 8, 2005	8:30 am - 9:30 am
August 19, 2005	8:30 am - 9:30 am
September 9, 2005	8:30 am - 9:30 am
September 30, 2005	8:30 am - 9:30 pm
October 14	8:30 am - 9:30 am
October 28	8:30 am - 9:30 am

Find out what makes the Offord Centre a world leader in healthy child development research!

Our Expertise Just Keeps Growing!

The Offord Centre for Child Studies has added five new researchers from McMaster University to its lineup of child development experts:

- **Martin Dooley**

Professor of Economics, specializes in the socioeconomic determinants of child health and development, including the impact of family income and neighbourhood quality on child well-being.

- **Alison Niccols**

Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, is Director of the Infant-Parent Program at McMaster Children's Hospital and an expert in parent-child interaction and the development and evaluation of interventions for families of young children.

- **Louis Schmidt**

Associate Professor of Psychology, is studying how differences in the brain affect the socio-emotional development of children, making them shy, fearful, anxious or aggressive.

- **Tracy Vaillancourt**

Associate Professor of Psychology, conducts research focused on aggression, bullying and peer victimization in children and adolescents.

- **Lonnie Zwaigenbaum**

Associate Professor of Pediatrics, is a developmental pediatrician at McMaster Children's Hospital and involved in studies designed to improve early identification of, and outcomes for, children with autism.

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It's Tee Time Again!

Annual golf-a-thon to be held September 12, 2005

The Offord Centre's most popular annual event is back again and it's better than ever!

The CHIP IN fore CHILDREN Golf-A-Thon will take place Monday, September 12, at Tyandaga Golf Course in Burlington. This is the Centre's premier fundraising event of the year and the only golf tournament anywhere dedicated to advancing children's mental health. Last year, we raised more than \$90,000 for troubled kids. Help us surpass the \$100,000 mark this year!

For more information and to make a donation in support of our enthusiastic golfers, go to www.offordcentre.com/golfathon.

Help us level the playing field for kids with social and emotional problems and ensure they get as good a chance as any to grow into healthy, contributing adults.

