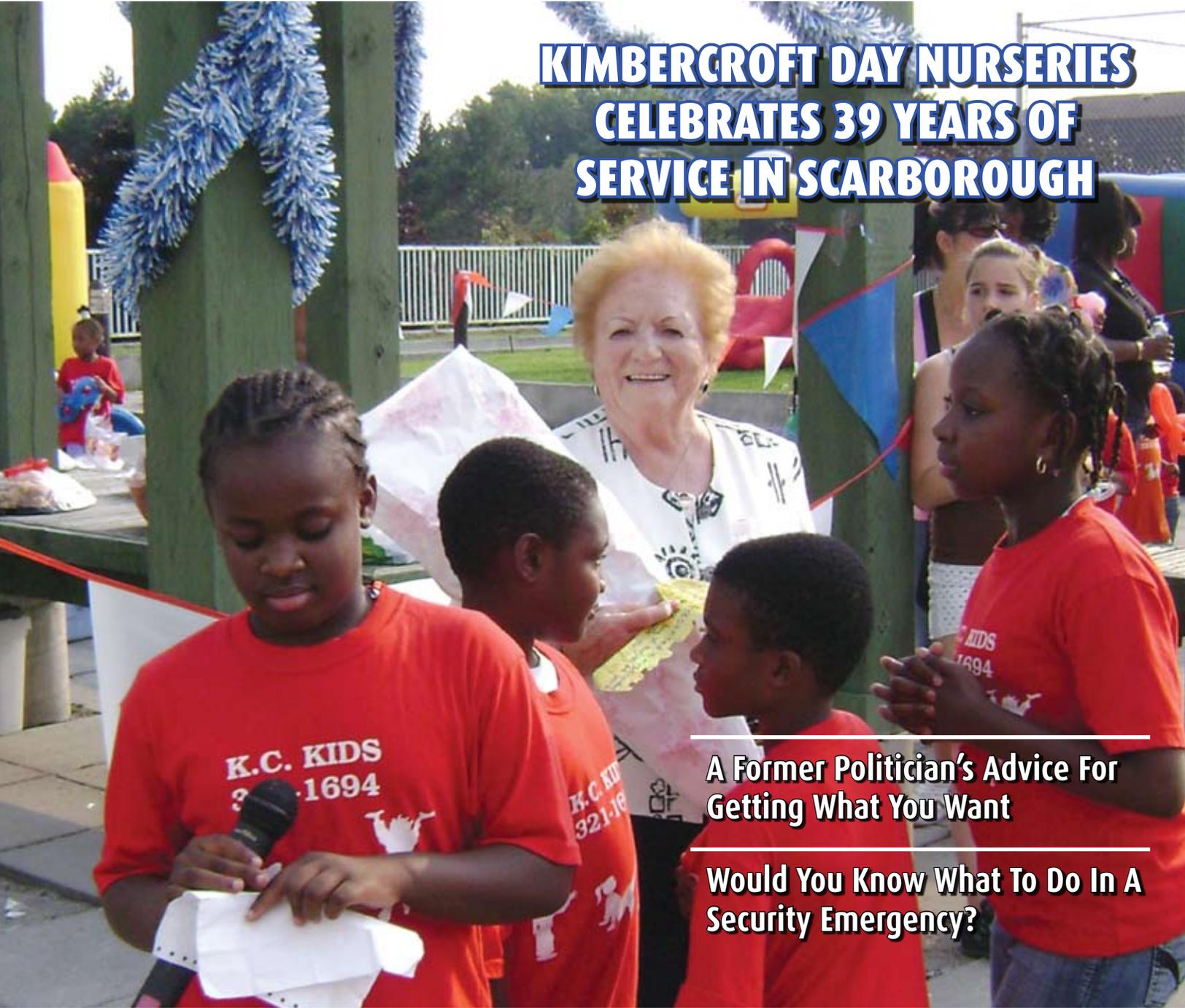


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# Childcare **TODAY**

**ADCO** THE ASSOCIATION OF DAY CARE OPERATORS OF ONTARIO

## **KIMBERCROFT DAY NURSERIES CELEBRATES 39 YEARS OF SERVICE IN SCARBOROUGH**



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THE ASSOCIATION OF DAY CARE  
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# KIMBERCROFT FOUNDER CELEBRATES 39 YEARS OF SERVICE IN SCARBOROUGH

By: Andrea Hannen

**A**ida Crawford has been in the day care business for a long time and she's loved every minute of it. Crawford and her daughter, Yolande McGregor, operate Kimbercroft Day Nurseries, serving more than 150 children per day in two Scarborough-area locations. The Kimbercroft programs do more than just provide these youngsters with high quality care and education while their parents work or go to school. They help families understand and embrace cultural diversity of each culture and respect for all.

Seeing a need in her own neighbourhood, Crawford and a partner, Mavis Payne, opened two Scarborough Village Day Nurseries locations nearly forty years ago in the Markham and Eglinton area. Crawford's business background includes working as a property manager and rental agent of apartment buildings. She also had a home daycare when her children were very young. "I've always loved working with children, and in those days, there were very few day care centres. It made me want to open my own," recalls Crawford.

As Scarborough's immigrant population grew, so did Crawford's program. Crawford estimates that 80% of the families she has served have been in Canada for less than ten years, most of them for less than five.

She and McGregor recently celebrated the 20th Anniversary of their newest centre, located at Markham and Sheppard. Over the years, Kimbercroft's client base has included families from almost every country one can name.

As the families seek to adjust to life in Canada, they face many challenges. Language barriers and financial hardship may be just the beginning. "For many, the toughest part is the fact that Canadian society differs so dramatically from what they've known before," notes Crawford. "At Kimbercroft, our goal is to use the hours a child is with us each day to provide a well-rounded program that enhances their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. Whether it's nutritious meals and snacks, or opportunities to be creative or to be involved in organized sports or music, or whatever, we try to give them the kinds of experiences we'd want our own children or grandchildren to have. Some of the parents we currently serve were in our care when they were children. They often tell us that the stability of the routine and the variety of experiences they had is what brought them back. They want their own children to have the same high level of care."

Crawford also recognizes the role that day care programs often play in helping children's parents adjust to the cultural norms and expectations of their adopted land. "Not every culture recogniz-



*ADCO member Aida Crawford has been in the child care business for nearly 40 years and still loves every minute of it.*

es the value of play-based learning and what it does for children, but little by little, when parents see that their children are well-protected at our centre and that through Kimbercroft, they're exposed a wide variety of activities, they begin to value some of the other things we teach."

As Crawford points out, many of the beliefs and behaviors that Canadians take for granted as natural and universal, are actually culturally based. "Things like table manners, taking turns with a piece of equipment or a toy, being respectful of the rights of others, working as a team and accepting that everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion even if you don't agree with it, are all skills that children need to learn if they're going to be successful as they grow up," she explains. "Multiculturalism doesn't work when it's just about celebrating your own culture or learning about someone else's. Each individual also has to learn how to become acceptable as a responsible, contributing member of a diverse society."

Crawford also points out that there is still a tremendous need for after-school programming to help

**"If you give a child love, affection and respect, they're more likely to give love, affection and respect to others as they grow up. A person can't give what he or she has never had."**

kids stay on the straight and narrow. "There isn't a lot of support out there for children aged nine to eleven. A lot of it depends on which school a child attends, but more needs to be done to keep children occupied and focused on positive activities."

She also notes that while standards in the day care industry are improving all of the time, governments at all levels have failed to make day care and after-school programs a key priority. "Every government has a different perspective on these issues, but discriminating against privately-owned centres in favour of those run by non-profits or the public sector is not the answer. It's tremendously hurtful to be told by your own government that you're not doing a good job, and to have them use your money to do it." Crawford points out that many of the alleged differences between private and non-profit programs are exaggerated for political reasons. "Despite the fact that private operators don't get the same level of funding as many non-profits, most of the private operators I know still try to offer their employees competitive salaries and benefits."

Crawford credits her success and



*Caring staff, colourful surroundings and a wide variety of activities keep the children at Kindercroft smiling.*

longevity in the child care business in part to her membership in ADCO. "It gives independent operators like myself a real sense of community, provides us with practical support when we're dealing with policy issues and helps us stay up-to-date on trends that affect our work." In addition to joining ADCO, her best advice to other child care owners and managers is as follows: "Professional supervisors and qualified teach-

ers are the backbone of any school. Get to know your staff, your parents and children. Spend as much time as possible at your centres to ensure that your programs are running smoothly. Work together with other day cares and resource centres in your area. You can never be too involved where children are concerned. Making a positive difference in the early years of a child's development is what's really important."



*Aida Crawford and daughter Yolande McGregor pose for a photo at last summer's barbecue for Kindercroft families.*