

Building Brains Together focused on art and resilience in final weeks

BY RY CLARKE - LETHBRIDGE HERALD LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER ON JULY 30, 2022.



Herald photo by Ry Clarke

Rayn Perry and Drayke Allred use building blocks meant to teach kids important fundamentals of brain development Friday at the Building Brains Together outdoor play event outside the Helen Schuler Nature Centre.

Building Brains Together held a 'pop-up' outdoor play event Friday outside the Helen Schuler Nature Centre, encouraging parents and youth to play fun games and activities aiming to help build strong fundamentals to learning.

BBT is running outdoor summer events Tuesday mornings and Wednesday in the afternoon at different areas across the city until Aug. 12. The programs are a free opportunity to showcase to families the importance of playing together and teaching games that help develop learning skills.

"This is the fourth year we've been running this program, but they've been testing it since I was a little kid," said Drayke Allred, Grade 11 student volunteer.

BBT is an organization aiming to continue the growth of evidence-based learning while empowering adults to demonstrate engagement and support for early child brain development. Aligning with the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, the organization works with research-based studies to infuse core brain development into learning through play. Working with Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge, it builds good mental function on the foundation of how the brain is developed. Through easy to learn games, children and parents can have fun while preparing them with sturdy foundations.

"We're run through the neuroscience department at the University of Lethbridge. A couple years ago, they did research on early childhood brain development using different games to improve early childhood brain development. Boosting executive functioning, like working memory, attention, and control," said Rayn Perry, an undergraduate student researcher. "We go to different community events and set up our tent and bring our games, connecting with parents. Our goal is really to empower parents to be able to improve their kids' brain development."

With classic games like 'red light green light', where kids can only move freely when the person says green light and must freeze when they say red light, kids can develop skills like attention and focus while honing physical skills like stillness and concentration. BBT works to revamp classic games with a twist to incorporate new research on development. Noticing the importance of early childhood development at ages of 3 to 5 when significant brain development is happening.

Each week tents are set up across the city with themes to help narrow the focus of those events. With two weeks to go, families looking to participate can join BBT at Chinook Lake Park 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Aug. 2 or Aug. 3 at 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. focusing on Art, and concludes with Resilience in its final week at Coalbanks Elementary School Aug. 9 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Aug. 10 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. All ages are welcome but parental supervision is required. More information can be found at buildingbrains.ca/events.

"The nice thing about (this event) is we get families that we wouldn't get at other places we go to and get to connect. We have a lot of resources on our website, including a free online course for parents. That's all about different brain development and ways to be conscious about your child's brain development, because at such an early age development is important for your whole life," said Perry.