

# Rainbow Daycare's Kids 'Amazing' All Right

By: [Gordon Sinclair Jr.](#)

Last month, when Southdale shopping mall store owner Laurie Carey went chasing into the parking lot after a gang of shoplifters who tried to get away with \$1,400 in merchandise, she expected the police would be the first ones to drop by and visit her.

Instead, she got an unexpected visit from a group of children.

The kids, aged six to 12, attend an after-school daycare program four doors from the Great Finds women's apparel store, and when they heard what happened to their neighbour they wanted her to know they cared.

"I've never seen anything like this," Laurie recalled. "They came in, all holding hands, with a huge handmade card that said, 'Be happy, don't be sad. We feel sorry for you. Cheer up.'"

"We were in tears," Laurie said.

Big elephant-sized tears.

"It really put a good feeling on a bad situation," she said.

But there's more to the story than simply what the kids did. It's how they came to decide to drop by that makes the story more interesting.

"These children are amazing," said Lorna Paisley, a supervisor at Rainbow Day Nursery Inc.

What helps them be amazing, she suggested, is empowering them, both individually and collectively.

And what empowers them, besides the management and staff, is something known as a play-based emergent curriculum. Basically, it involves the staff watching the children play, listening to what they say and encouraging their individuality and creativity.

But in a team way.

For example?

Lorna recalled how last Halloween the kids decided they wanted to have a party and make a movie of it.

So they made their own costumes, sketched out and did their own makeup, and then, with the help of a dance teacher, learned the steps to the *Thriller* video. And when they finished the movie they sold the DVDs to their parents.

Which is one way they make money to buy what they want for the daycare centre. Things like the Wii video game console they purchased.

"Right now they're into making a carnival," Lorna said.

As what they did for Great Finds owner Laurie Carey suggests, though, it's not all about what they can get and do for themselves.

Far from it.

They also raise money for causes. A few years ago they sent off \$1,000 to help the people of New Orleans after hurricane Katrina. And more recently they gave \$850 to Riding for the Disabled.

Of course, they get assistance from other caring people along the way.

As it happens, Laurie Carey at Great Finds is one of the people who help the kids do what they do for others, in her case by donating material from her shop that the children turn into crafts for sale or even costumes for Halloween. That's why the kids felt sorry for her when they heard what happened.

Here's where the art of the teaching moment comes and the story takes on a deeper meaning.

Simply feeling bad wasn't good enough, Lorna told the kids.

"What could they do?" she challenged. "Well,' one of the children said, "we could make her a card."

And that's how they all ended up in Great Finds one afternoon last month with that card and a fistful of quarters and dimes to go with it for the nice lady who was nice to them.

It wasn't just Laurie and Great Finds the kids reached out to, though. They also called on the owners of another nearby store who had a window smashed and a TV stolen just a few days after the shoplifting incident.

"They saw them as people who had lost something," Lorna said.

So they raised money for them, too.

Lorna explained: "They think that way, when they see something like that they have the power to fix it."

But part of what struck Laurie Carey as being so exceptional about what the kids next door did for her is the contrast between what she's always hearing about the way kids are today, and who these children are.

"They're teaching them to be caring and kind," Laurie said of the staff at Rainbow.

Or one could put it another way.

They're teaching them something that goes beyond the ABCs of learning to the more tricky D and E.

Decision-making and empathy.

I think what it's fundamentally about, though, is the children discovering who they can be if they're allowed to be who they really are.

But the biggest lesson in this story of how to bring out the best in a child isn't for the children, of course.

It's for the parents.

The kids are all right.