

Psychologist wins award for helping children

By JAN DEAN
Staff

At a time in life when most people are thinking about retirement, psychologist Dr. Susan Berry has never been more passionate about her work with children.

That passion, combined with her experience and dedication, won Berry, 66, the Mary Neville Award that was presented on Tuesday at Mississauga Convention Centre.

The award is presented annually by Peel Children's Centre (PCC), a facility that treats children and their families with mental health issues, to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution towards prevention and early intervention in children's mental health services.

The award was presented to Berry after the

PCC's annual general meeting.

"Susan has an amazing ability to attune to and with infants and young children," said PCC clinical manager Donna McLroy when she nominated Berry for the award. "More remarkably, she is able to turn this gift into teachable moments to improve the quality of relationships between parents and their preschoolers."

Berry thinks of herself as an interpreter of children. She specializes in working with children from birth to age 6. She has worked at the PCC since 1993.

"Since I started learning about infant development, I've wanted to help parents understand their babies, especially those who can't communicate verbally," said Berry. "Infants make sense of the world in very different ways at different stages. Because they don't under-

stand, parents can take behaviours like temper tantrums personally."

A sympathetic understanding of their children is especially important for parents when children have developmental problems and don't behave according to their chronological ages.

"My job absolutely never gets boring because each child is unique," said Berry. "Each one is a challenge and a joy."

She says working with a strong team of clinicians makes her job easier and makes her more effective. Because parents trust the clinicians they work with, they're more willing to trust her.

"What we do is extremely helpful for many parents," said Berry. "They know they can do things a little differently and they can see their relationships with their children get better. The see their child succeeds better at school."

Berry grew up in Streetsville. She obtained her PhD in psychology at York University.

She has no children of her own, but she has 10 nieces and nephews.

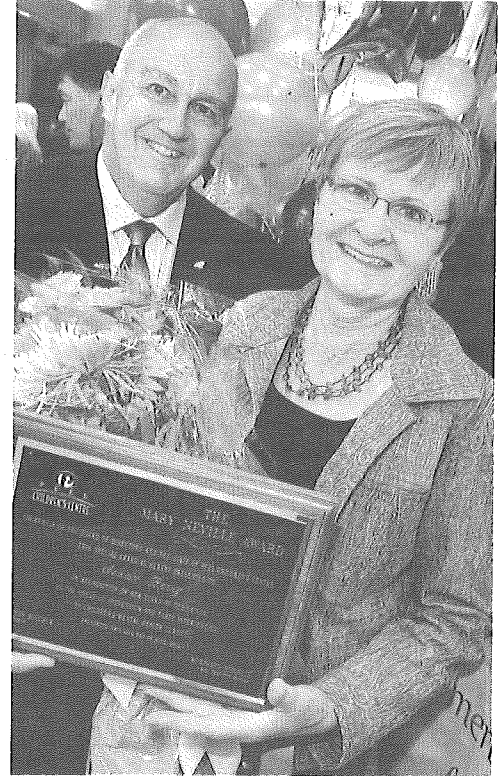
Berry says she might start thinking about retirement in the fall.

"In my field, the more experience you have, the better," she said. "Working with infants and children is my first and only love."

Humphrey Mitchell, the CEO of PCC, congratulated Berry for so richly deserving the award.

Berry is the 28th recipient of the award.

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The Peel Children's Centre presented its annual Mary Neville Award Tuesday to Dr. Susan Berry, shown here with Humphrey Mitchell, CEO of the Peel Children's Centre.
Staff photo by Rob Beintema