

# CHILD LIFE, MEET NATURE

Since I have removed my Nanny hat, and have more permanently replaced it with my Child Life Specialist (slash Assistant) hat, I have been exploring opportunities in the community around me where I can learn more about child life. With a suddenly open schedule and a car – temporarily – at my disposal, I thought that this would be the perfect opportunity to explore a child life hidden gem.

Enter: Fiddlehead Care Farm

Fiddlehead Care Farm (FCF) is a care farm located outside of Toronto that is geared toward using the healing power of the great outdoors to provide a positive and productive escape from the hustle of the everyday. FCF is run by a dynamic Child Life Specialist-Social Worker duo who have done incredible work building this farm from the ground up to provide support for families and children in the surrounding community to benefit from. To learn more about care farming at FCF and it's incredible benefits, [click here](#).

Last Monday I had the chance to visit my friend Breanne Mathers, CCLS, at FCF who so graciously took the time to show me around the farm, and share with me the amazing work they are doing for children and families in the community. Using child life theories and principles Breanne uses her training and skills to provide this specialized service to those who need them. There are many programs and fun opportunities offered through FCF that surround the concept of care farming, while incorporating the principles of child life. From basic one-on-one support sessions, to basic community farming and harvesting, the sky is the limit. At FCF, children are encouraged to roam freely, explore the 50 acre property, and to go wherever the wind takes them! Kids are taught the importance of farming, and using what the land provides them, including collecting chicken eggs, feeding the animals, and harvesting plants they have planted. This accessible, and family friendly environment allows for children and adults of all abilities to enjoy what nature has to offer, while reaping all the therapeutic benefits.

Some programs offered at FCF are paediatric therapy, family counselling, a farm visiting program for community groups and schools, camps, in addition to volunteer and student placement opportunities throughout the year. Oh – and did I mention they have a therapeutic animal program? Not just any animal, but the best animal. *Luna the pig!* She is loving, gentle, and has the ability to form a special connection with children of varying abilities, needs, background, and ages, promoting growth and development during their time at the farm.

Seeing the ways in which the FCF team has shaped their land, programming, and organization is so inspiring and eye-opening. With beautiful nature trails, farm animals, a music circle, and a beautifully lush community garden, it is impossible to leave FCF without feeling relaxed and revitalized.

I highly encourage anyone who has the time to head to Mono, Ontario to visit this extraordinary farm. I am *so* glad I finally took the chance to explore the amazing area and want to extend the sincerest thanks to Breanne for incorporating child life in to such a unique line of work and for providing these services to children and families in the community.



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