

# SPECIAL REPORT

Join us for a Code Red Open Forum, Thursday, April 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Spectator auditorium. This session is free, but you must register in advance. Call our Open Forum line at 905-526-3535 to register

former City of Hamilton.

■ In the inner-city neighbourhood bounded by Wellington Street North, the harbourfront, Sherman Avenue North and the rail line near Barton Street, the rate of trauma incidents to children under the age of 16 was 264 per 1,000 people.

At the other extreme, the rate of trauma events to children under 16 in one rural Flamborough neighbourhood was 33 per 1,000 people.

■ In the inner-city neighbourhood between King Street West, Queen Street South and the rail line, the rate of high school dropouts was 267 per 1,000 students.

By contrast, in the Stoney Creek neighbourhood that stretches from the waterfront to the escarpment near Glover Road, the high school dropout rate was six per 1,000 students.

The analysis showed there are strong correlations between dropout rates, the proportion of single-mom families and poverty levels.

New research is showing that living in poverty can actually change the brain structure in children, according to Dr. Jean Clinton, a child psychiatrist and leading specialist in early-child development at McMaster University.

"It literally changes your brain," said Clinton, an associate member of the renowned Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster.

One study by a University of Toronto researcher showed that the brain area that self-regulates impulse control is different in children living in poverty than those who aren't.

"If you're living in poverty, the number of words that are uttered to children is lower compared to children not in poverty," said Clinton. "They're also more imperative: 'Do this, don't do that.'"

"If your challenge is to survive, you're not focusing on the niceties. If your life is created in an urgency mode, you're saying 'Don't touch that.'"

"It's not the fault of the parents at all," Clinton added. "It's ours as a society."

"If we actually want equity, we have to have it from the start, and that really speaks to what we can do in terms of early-child development."

Hamilton has launched a couple of aggressive efforts to improve outcomes for children.

One is the Best Start network, which offers comprehensive integrated services for children in neighbourhoods across the city.

The other is the nurse-family partnership, a novel program with Hamilton serving as the pilot site for Canada.

The nurse-family partnership is an intensive home-visit program that matches a nurse with high-risk moms and their babies for a two-year period.

"It's targeted basically at single moms on low incomes that are under 21, so we're talking about really high-risk folks," said Dr. Chris Mackie, a Hamilton associate medical officer of health.

"If you can help a child begin on the right trajectory then that's going to impact them for their whole life," said Mackie. "It's a really cost-effective way of making a difference."



Meet Marie Gudgeon, a patient of Peggy Carter-arrowsmith, the nurse practitioner mentioned earlier.

Carter-arrowsmith talked about watching teen moms in her practice repeating the cycle of their own mothers.

Gudgeon realizes she's an example of that very cycle. She also realizes that not everyone will agree with or approve of the trajectory her life has taken so far.

She is 21 years old and has four children, including twin boys who recently celebrated their first birthday.

She never finished Grade 9, choosing instead to hang around the house with her mom.

"She couldn't really handle me when I was younger," said Gudgeon. "I was very loud and outspoken."

"I just really didn't like school and being around all the kids, and having to interact with the teachers and being told what to do," she added. "But now I wish I hadn't been like that, and I wish that I had already finished school instead of waiting for my kids to grow up enough that I can start school again."

Gudgeon became pregnant with her first child when she was 16.

Her mom was pregnant with her when she was 16; her mom's mom pregnant with her when she was 17.

"My kids actually have a great-grandmother," said Gudgeon, who lives in Hamilton's inner city with her partner, the man who is the father of her four children.

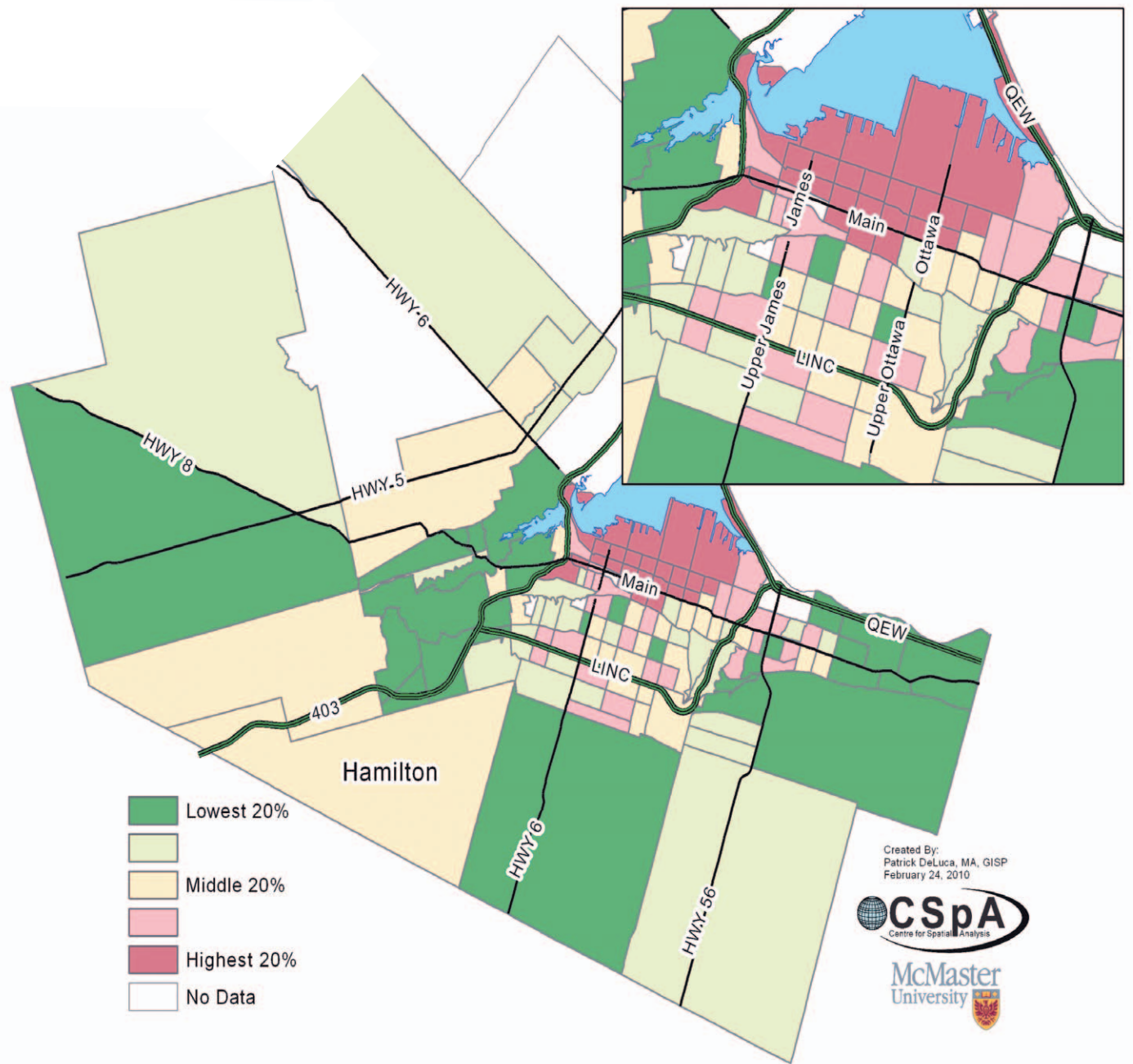
Gudgeon remains relentlessly optimistic about the future, and she clearly loves her children deeply.

She vows that she will return to school, and one day become a nurse.

She also vows that the cycle will be broken with her four-year-old daughter.

But what if she is like you?

"No, she's not going to be," said Gudgeon. "She's going to have a life full of opportunity, that's why."



## HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE PUBLIC AND CATHOLIC BOARDS COMBINED PER 1,000 STUDENTS

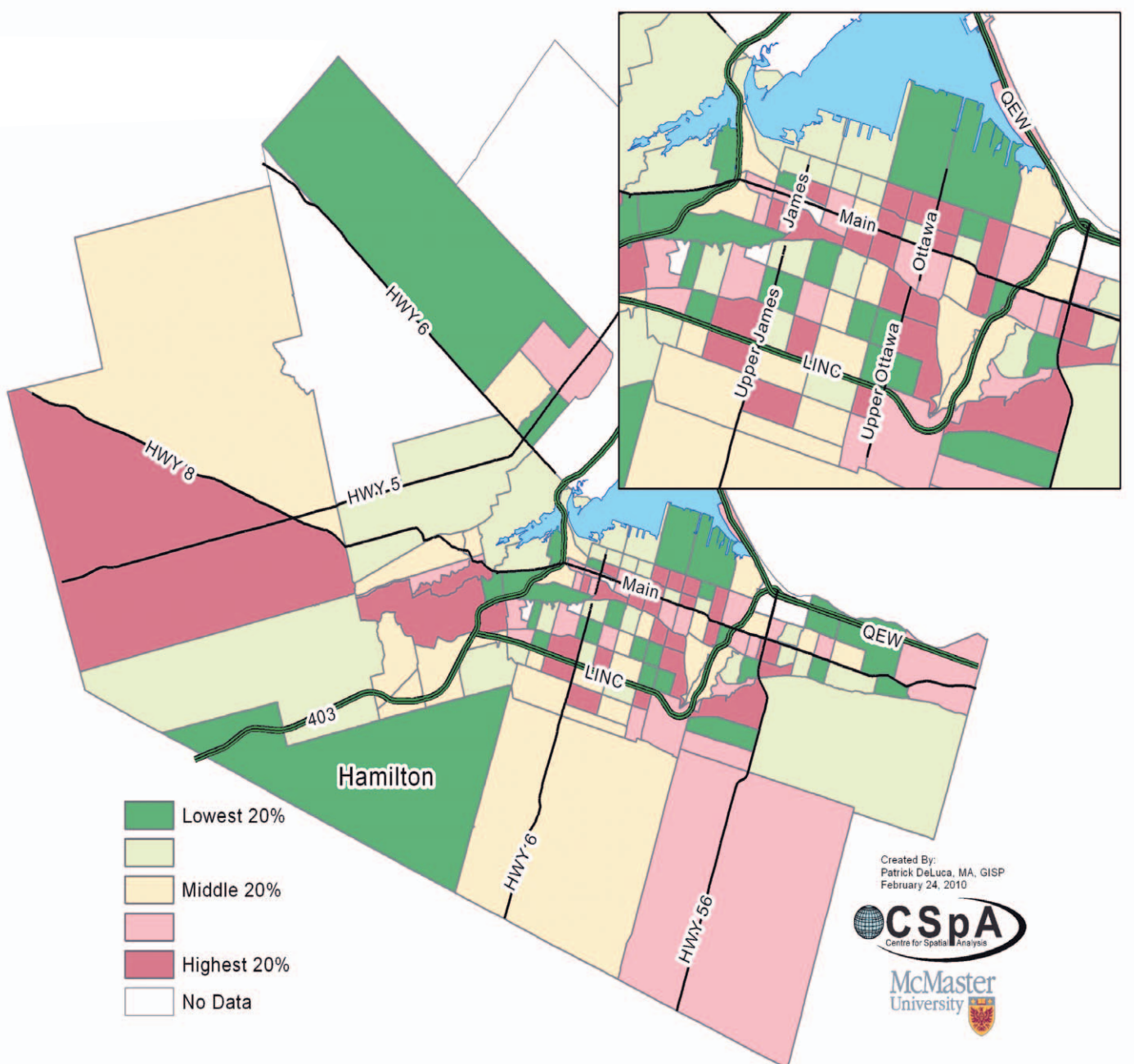
### HIGHEST

1. 5370041 (King Street West / Queen Street South / rail line)	267
2. 5370050 (Wellington Street North / Cannon Street East / Wentworth Street North / Main Street East)	254
3. 5370062 (Wellington Street North / rail line / Wentworth Street North / Cannon Street East)	249
4. 5370035 (Wellington Street South / Main Street East / Wentworth Street South / rail line)	238
5. 5370061 (Wentworth Street North / rail line / Sherman Avenue North / Cannon Street East)	235

### LOWEST

1. 5370085.03 (Millen Road / Barton Street / Fruitland Road / Highway 8 / Jones Road / Escarpment / Glover Road / waterfront)	6
2. 5370084.04 (Waterfront / Millen Road / Barton Street / inside Grays Road)	14
3. 5370124 (Sulphur Creek / east of Scenic Drive / Mohawk Road / Wilson Street / Sulphur Springs Road)	16
4. 5370122.01 (Wilson Street West / Shaver Road / Garner Road / Fiddlers Green Road)	16
5. 5370123 (Garner Road / Southcote Road / Highway 403 / Golf Links Road / Mohawk Road / Wilson Street / Fiddlers Green Road)	17

**NOTE:** Neighbourhoods are identified by their Hamilton census tract number, as defined by Statistics Canada (5370001, for example). For a complete list of Hamilton's census tracts and their geographic boundaries, visit the Code Red project at thespec.com.



## LOW BIRTH-WEIGHT BABIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BIRTHS

### HIGHEST

1. 5370142.01 (Middletown Road / Highway 8 / Governors Road / Flamborough border)	47.1%
2. 5370023 (Upper Gage Avenue / Mountain brow / Upper Ottawa Street / Fennell Avenue East)	25%
3. 5370081 (Centennial Parkway / King Street / Grays Road / Escarpment)	25%
4. 5370124 (Sulphur Creek / east of Scenic Drive / Mohawk Road / Wilson Street / Sulphur Springs Road)	23.6%
5. 5370024 (Mountain brow / Upper Ottawa Street / Fennell Avenue East)	23.1%

### LOWEST

There were 24 census tracts that had a 0 per cent rate of low birth-weight babies.