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10 COMMUNITIES TO GET EARLY EDUCATION MATTERS GRANTS FOR COLLABORATIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED 4K

MADISON, WIS. – On November 1, organizations in 10 Wisconsin communities will receive \$10,000 each to initiate collaborative, community-based 4-year-old kindergarten programs, officials from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) announced today. The grants are part of the organization's Early Education Matters project, a two-year, \$1.3 million initiative administered by WCCF with funding from the Joyce Foundation. Additionally, four Milwaukee-based childcare providers (to be named later this week) will each receive \$6,000 to meet a similar goal, and another 10 communities will be selected to receive funding in 2005.

Early Education Matters promotes a collaborative, community-based approach to improving access to high quality learning experiences for all of Wisconsin's children.

"We believe that collaborative models of early education for 4-year-olds provide the greatest access for all children, especially those most in need," said Charity Eleson, WCCF's executive director. "By involving all aspects of a community's resources for children—childcare, school districts, transportation and business—we can create the kind of high-quality, stimulating and safe environment for learning that all children deserve. And we can optimize dollars through consistency of programming and by decreasing transition and transportation costs throughout the day."

"Getting children into a well-funded, high quality learning environment during this critical age is integral to getting children ready to succeed in school," Eleson said. "There is evidence to indicate that providing this foundation early in a child's life decreases delinquency rates, decreases the incidence of teen pregnancy, yields higher academic outcomes and increases the probability of high school graduation."

Research has shown that these early investments yield strong returns for children, the community and the taxpayer, Eleson said. "This is preventative medicine that will reap significant societal and economic development rewards in the long term. The Early Education Matters project is committed to providing access to high quality early education for all of Wisconsin's 4-year-olds. Community collaboration is key to making that happen."

The grants will be used in communities planning to develop community-based, collaborative 4-year-old kindergarten. Grants will cover start-up costs including feasibility studies, program planning and modeling, early learning standards training, location planning, consensus building, site visits, public awareness activities, transportation services assessment and in one instance, to convene an early childhood learning community summit.

Specifically, the 10 communities and organizations are:

- Antigo Unified School District – Contact: Larry Nelson, district administrator, 715-627-4355 or lnelson@antigoschools.k12.wi.us
- Black River Falls School District – Contact: Sherri Torkelson, director of Curriculum and Instruction, 715-284-1618, ext. 1201 or torkeshe@brf.org.

- Chippewa Falls Area School District – Contact: Claudia Dempsey, director of special education; 715-726-2785 or dempsecm@chipfalls.k12.wi.us.
- Eau Claire Area School District/Early Learning Initiative – Contact: Paula Wainscott, Early Learning coordinator; 715-852-3079 or pwainscott@ecasd.k12.wi.us.
- Kenosha County Early Childhood Council – Contact: Kathy Burns, vice president Kenosha County Early Childhood Council, 262 697-4628 or kburns@co.kenosha.wi.us.
- Kiel Area School District – Contact: Sue Elliott, principal, Meeme Elementary and Zielanis Elementary schools, 920-693-8355 or selliott@kiel.k12.wi.us.
- Lake Mills 4K Community Project – Contact: Dean Sanders, district administrator, Lake Mills Area School District; 920-648-2215 or dean.sanders@lakemills.k12.wi.us.
- Luxemburg-Casco School District – Contact: James Kiefer, primary school principal; 920-845-2315 or jkiefer@luxcasco.k12.wi.us.
- Monroe School District – Contact: Joe Monroe, assistant director of Special Education, 608-328-7184 or joe.monroe@monroe.k12.wi.us.
- Superior School District – Contact: Maryjane Burdge, director of Student Services. 715-394-8704 or burdgem@superior.k12.wi.us.

With offices in Madison and Milwaukee, WCCF is a private, non-profit, non-partisan, multi-issue statewide child and family advocacy organization. It is committed to improving the lives of children and their families, particularly vulnerable children, through advocacy, research and policy change.

Based in Chicago with assets of just under \$750 million, the Joyce Foundation supports efforts to strengthen public policies in ways that improve the quality of life in the Great Lakes region. The Foundation's early education grant-making efforts support the expansion of opportunities for and improvement in the quality of early education in Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. The Foundation also makes grants in the areas of employment, environment, gun violence prevention, money and politics, and culture.

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