



For immediate release
April 19, 2004

Contact: Charity Eleson, (608) 284-0580, x302
Jill Jacklitz, (608) 284-0580, x325

Joyce Foundation Invests Big in Improving Education for the Small in Wisconsin

The Chicago-based Joyce Foundation has approved a two-year, \$1.3 million grant request for Early Education Matters, a collaborative project of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF), the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, the Child Care Research Partnership of UW-Extension, and Milwaukee Public Schools. The goal of the project is to expand the quality and quantity of early education experiences available to Wisconsin's four-year olds. WCCF will serve as lead agency on the project. This project will work closely with the Forces for Four project of the Department of Public Instruction, an initiative funded by the Trust for Early Education of the Pew Charitable Trust to expand collaborative 4-year kindergarten.

"We're grateful to the Board of Trustees of the Joyce Foundation for sharing our enthusiasm about the Early Education Matters proposal," said WCCF Executive Director Charity Eleson. "We're excited to be a part of this important initiative, and look forward working with our partners to help make Wisconsin a leader in early education."

Early Education Matters combines research, training, and technical assistance focused on community-based, collaborative early education models. Collaboration between school districts, child care providers and Head Start programs allows communities to consolidate all of their resources available for educating four year olds, and provides the greatest opportunity for improving the quality of care and education for all young children, whether they are learning at home, in child care settings, in Head Start programs or in first grade.

"The research is clear: Quality early education matters," Eleson said. "Studies have consistently shown that children, especially low-income children, who participate in quality early learning experiences have improved academic performance and reduced involvement in the juvenile justice system as teenagers."

WCCF is an independent nonprofit agency working to improve outcomes for Wisconsin's children through research, education and advocacy. For more information on WCCF, visit <http://www.wccf.org>. The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association is a statewide private nonprofit agency promoting excellence in child development practices through a range of professional growth opportunities and support services. The Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership (UW-Extension) focuses its research on the quality and availability of child care and early education experiences for Wisconsin's

(more)

children. The Milwaukee Public School System is the largest school district in Wisconsin serving a diverse racial, ethnic and socio-economic population of over 105,000 students.

Based in Chicago with assets of \$750 million, the Joyce Foundation supports efforts to strengthen public policies in ways that improve the quality of life in the Great Lakes region. Education grantmaking of approximately \$8 million annually works to ensure that all Midwest children receive an education that prepares them for lives as thoughtful and productive citizens, regardless of race, gender, or economic circumstances. An important part of that effort is to improve early education opportunities. Other grant programs are in Environment, Employment, Money and Politics, Gun Violence Prevention, and Culture. For more information on the Joyce Foundation, visit <http://www.joycefdn.org>.

###