



ECRC Community Chronicle

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER :: *Spring News 2015*

An Impressive Return on Investment

WHY EARLY CHILDHOOD IS THE WISEST INVESTMENT OF ALL

Would it surprise you to know that an investment in our youngest children yields a higher return than an investment in the stock market?

It's true. Economist James Heckman found that an investment in high-quality early learning yields "somewhere between 7 percent and 10 percent. For comparison, historically the stock market has grown an average of 5.8 percent each year. And those benefits compound over time."¹

While investing in early childhood may not directly enrich your personal financial portfolio, it deeply and significantly enriches the community and secures a more prosperous future for us all, by making sure that children are on the path to school success rather than the path to poverty and incarceration.

Arthur J. Rolnick is senior vice president and director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis; he feels investing in early childhood is the most cost-effective way to spur economic development. He states, "I've heard from criminal justice professionals around the country. ...

These professionals see the problems every day. They realize that if a child has a very slow start, or if they're far behind in kindergarten, odds are the criminal justice system is going to see them somewhere down the road, five, ten, fifteen years later. ...The good news is that early childhood development research tells us that interventions can work, and that investing in a child's early years of development yields a much better return than waiting to invest in later years."²

It helps to look at a child as pure potential. Just as every seed has the potential to either sprout or not, depending upon environmental conditions, every child has the potential to either succeed or fail. For a seed, what makes the difference is the right balance of moisture, light, and nutrients. What makes the difference for a child? Our commitment to providing the optimal conditions for learning and engagement.

While no one can control every element of a child's environment, we can certainly focus on certain key elements. For instance, we know that parental involvement is crucial. Research clearly shows that when a parent is engaged, there is a much greater chance that the child will begin school

Continued on page 8

A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS



Early childhood and economics may not seem to go together, but they're more related than you might think. Economists are increasingly advocating for investment in high-quality early education. Their research shows that if you want to dramatically improve a community, develop its workforce, increase productivity, reduce crime, and enhance quality of life across the board, there's no better investment than early childhood.

It's often said that a rising tide lifts all boats. That's particularly applicable to community improvement and stability. Our community is only as strong as our neediest citizens. That's why we partner with numerous community organizations to provide resources, services, and programming to the most at-risk and underserved families throughout our community.

Our neighborhood-based strategy has been highly effective thus far. For instance, the neighborhood surrounding Canton's Allen Elementary School is home to roughly 700 children under the age of 5. The neighborhood has no care providers and only two preschool classrooms that have a total capacity of 50 children. Several months ago, thanks to funding from the Stark Community Foundation, we began bringing weekly parent-child educational sessions to Allen Neighborhood families. We now have 92 Allen-area families enrolled in the SPARK program, working to get their children ready for kindergarten, and the Canton SPARK program actually has families on a waiting list for the first time.

As we've begun reaching families right in the neighborhoods where they live, we've asked them what resources and services they need and want. By directly engaging families in conversation about their needs, we're partnering with them to fulfill their vision of community improvement. This empowers the residents and helps us make sure we and our partners are providing what they need.

And something amazing is happening: we're seeing transformations right before our eyes. We're seeing engagement, education, and the emergence of parent leaders. We're seeing young children become excited about learning. We're finding that what the economists say is true: there is no greater investment than one that helps those in our own community thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Hasselman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

SCOTT HASSELMAN, *Executive Director*

Listed here are the names of our generous donors. Please consider making a gift to the ECRC's current annual fund.

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Stark Community Foundation
Stark County Department of Job and Family Services
Stark County Family Council
United Way of Greater Stark County

10,000 +

PNC Foundation

\$5,000.00 +

Hoover Foundation

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Austin-Bailey Health and Wellness Foundation
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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this listing of donors. If your name has been omitted or listed incorrectly, we sincerely apologize and ask you to please contact Sandy Turner at 330.491.3272, ext. 5677 so that we may correct our records.

TRIBUTE GIFTS RECEIVED IN 2014

Gifts received in memory of Margaret Beebe

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Gift received in memory of Sr. Cabrini Ferritto, CSA

Regina Health Center

Gift received in honor of Evie and Hudson Gallant

Ms. Rebecca Gallant

Gift received in honor of Sister Judith Ann Karam, CSA 50th Jubilee

Mr. and Mrs. R. Daryl Close

Gift received in honor of Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine

Ms. Robin J. Bachman

Gift received in memory of Linda Sklar's Aunt Connie

Dr. Cecelia M. Schweizer

Mitigating the Effects of Poverty

EDUCATION
IN ACTION

HOW SPARK CHANGES LIVES WITH ITS “READINESS FORMULA”

In many ways, life success can be predicted by how the school experience begins. Children who begin school ready to learn generally tend to perform well and follow a positive and productive life path. Unfortunately, children living in poverty are at very high risk of beginning school behind their wealthier peers, and they may never catch up. According to the Brookings Institution, “poor children in the United States start school at a disadvantage in terms of their early skills, behaviors, and health. Fewer than half (48 percent) of poor children are ready for school at age five, compared to 75 percent of children from families with moderate and high income.”¹ The School Readiness Indicators Initiative agrees that “children from low-income families are more likely to start school with limited language skills, health problems, and social and emotional problems that interfere with learning, and...the larger the gap at school entry, the harder it is to close.”²

There are many reasons for this “achievement gap.” According to the Rand Corporation, “neighborhoods of concentrated poverty (typically defined as those with a poverty rate exceeding 20 percent) provide more limited opportunities for young children in terms of social interaction, positive role models, and other resources, such as quality child care, health facilities, parks, and playgrounds, that are important for healthy child development.”³

While we may not be able to remedy the root causes of poverty, we can mitigate some of their effects. The SPARK kindergarten readiness program is designed specifically to counteract certain effects of living in poverty that interfere with a child’s ability to prepare for school.

The SPARK “formula” provides in a child’s home environment those conditions that foster school readiness: engaged parents, books and supplies, a caring and skilled home visitor who assists in a culturally relevant and non-threatening manner, an individualized learning plan, and early access to special interventions (such as speech therapy) that might otherwise be out of reach.

The verdict? The SPARK formula works. For nine consecutive years, thousands of SPARK children throughout Ohio have significantly outperformed their non-SPARK peers on the kindergarten readiness assessment, and they continue to have an advantage at least through the fifth grade.

Poverty is a multi-faceted societal problem that won’t be solved anytime soon. Fortunately, SPARK is a highly effective school readiness resource that helps our most vulnerable children begin school on par with their peers and begin traveling the path to school and life success. ♦

The SPARK Formula for School Readiness

- Engaged parents
- + Books and supplies
- + A caring and skilled parent partner
- + A plan for learning
- + Access to special interventions
- = A child who’s ready and excited to succeed!

Rates of Economic Disadvantage in SPARK School Districts

As reported by the Ohio Department of Education

Rate	County
30-39%	Darke, Pickaway
50-59%	Montgomery
60-69%	Stark
70-79%	Hamilton, Cuyahoga, Clark
80-89%	Franklin, Summit

NOTES:

¹ www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/3/19%20school%20disadvantage%20isaacs/0319_school_disadvantage_isaacs.pdf

² www.gettingready.org/matriarch/d.asp?PageID=303&PageName2=pdfhold&p=&PageName=Getting+Ready+-+Full+Report%2Epdf

³ www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9144/index1.html



Resource Rooms Opening for South End Families



Phase 2 of the ECRC's Neighborhood Approach has begun. Once again, we're busy bringing early childhood resources right to those in our community who need them the most.

Thanks to funding from Incept, and in cooperation with Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority and the Stark County Department of Job and Family Services, residents at the Linwood Acres and Jackson Sherrick subsidized apartment complexes will now have access to fully equipped family resource rooms.

The resource rooms are scaled-down versions of the ECRC's Inspiration Station family learning space. They're safe spaces where families can learn, play, and explore. Each room will offer a home living/dramatic play area with a kitchen and dress-up clothing, a creative area stocked with art supplies, and a cozy area with a couch, comfortable chairs, and lots of children's books.

The ECRC and its many community partners, including Allen Elementary School, Child and Adolescent Behavioral

Health, Jackson Sherrick Church of God, the Stark County District Library, and the Stark County Park District, will offer weekly family programming in the resource rooms. A family resource specialist will be on site weekly as well, to connect families with community resources as needed.

Both resource rooms will host open house events at the end of March and will then be available for families to use. ♦



HELP US BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Because we are a nonprofit organization, most of our support comes from foundations, businesses, community organizations, and individuals. We encourage you to consider—or continue—making a contribution.

We're so pleased to be able to serve so many families and educators, but we'd love to serve even more. And that's where you come in. We encourage you to stand with us as we equip parents to cultivate a long-term love of learning in their children, strengthen family bonds, and help teachers become more effective. Your generosity today will have a direct impact on children and families in our community for generations. Rarely does an investment leave a legacy that significant.

You can send a donation in the enclosed envelope or give securely online at ecresourcecenter.org.

FIND US ONLINE Visit ecresourcecenter.org to learn more about our programs, services, and volunteer opportunities, and to donate.

Parent Cafés:

Strengthening Families Through Dialogue

The ECRC continues to bring needed resources to at-risk neighborhoods, by offering Parent Cafés throughout the community.

Parent Cafés are a series of structured small group conversations that bring parents together to directly engage diverse perspectives. The sessions are part of a national child abuse prevention strategy called Strengthening Families™, which focuses on keeping children safe by helping their parents develop the following “protective factors” that prevent abuse:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

The conversation and collaboration that occur at the sessions, along with the relationship building and empathy that develop within the structured small group format, are highly effective. In a study of more than 4,000 parent participants, Parent Cafés were found to reduce stress, increase protective factors, increase peace and well-being, increase parenting

knowledge and skills, and facilitate meaningful relationships and community-building. More than 85% of the participants who were studied reported an increased awareness/knowledge of the protective factors as a result of their participation.

According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the cafes are effective because “the intimacy of the conversation and parent leadership help to create a level of candor that might not be achieved in a standard focus group or other feedback or input process. The careful structuring of the questions helps synthesize knowledge across a range of individual experience.”¹

The cafes also provide unique opportunities for parent leadership. Interested parents who have attended at least three sessions may be trained to serve as table hosts, leading and guiding the discussion.

In October of last year, the ECRC contracted with Be Strong Families, a subsidiary of Strengthening Families, to train 25 community members to facilitate Parent Cafés. The Ohio Children’s Trust Fund has funded six Parent Café sites in Stark County. Currently, sessions are offered at four Canton City elementary schools and at Head Start programs in Massillon and Alliance.

Parent Cafés: How do they work?

As the Be Strong Families organization states, these “meaningful conversations that strengthen families” occur within a structure that “recognizes and affirms parents’ leadership role in their families and in their communities.”²

“Set in a welcoming and inviting café-like environment, parents move between tables, engaging in dialogue around a question or questions that encourage the exchange of ideas. Each café inspires parents to share, listen, and collaborate in order to ‘build community wisdom.’”²

- Parent Cafés are free for participants. Food and child care are provided.
- Each session typically serves between 12 and 20 participants per session, with no more than five parents per table.
- Sessions are led and facilitated by hosts who pose parenting questions and scenarios to the group.
- Once the questions are adequately addressed, the parents move to a different table to join in a conversation about another topic. This rotation continues throughout the two-hour session.

REACHING
OUT

NOTES:

¹<http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/community-and-parent-cafes>

²http://strengtheningfamilies.unitedway.org/community_overview.cfm

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Early Head Start Funding Awarded for Stark County

We're thrilled to announce that the YWCA of Canton, in partnership with the Early Childhood Resource Center, First Baptist Childcare, JRC Learning Center, Oakpark Childcare Massillon, Stuckey Family Interfaith Child Development Center, and three in-home family providers, has been awarded a five-year renewable Early Head Start grant that will provide nearly \$2 million per year for comprehensive child development and family support services for 155 Stark County children who range in age from six weeks to three years and live in low-income households.

The funding supports year-round slots in high-quality settings, as well as a comprehensive network of supports for families and educators. Along with other partners, Help Me Grow will provide home visits for the families and services for children who need early intervention. Canton Health Department nurses will conduct health and dental screenings and review the children's health records for any concerns. The Resiliency Project will provide support services to teachers and to families with children who are experiencing behavioral or social-emotional concerns. In addition, every educator serving these children will have the opportunity to take at least one professional development course per year through the Early Childhood Resource Center.

COMING EVENTS

THE BIG, BIG, REALLY BIG TOY BOX FUNDRAISER

Join us for our third annual family fundraising event, The Big, Big, REALLY BIG Toy Box.

When: Sunday, September 27 from 2:00-6:00 p.m.

Where: Cultural Center for the Arts in Canton

All proceeds will go to support the ECRC's programs, services, and resources for educators and families. For information on sponsorship, contact the ECRC Development Manager Sandy Turner at sturner@ecresourcecenter.org or 330.491.3272.



NEWS BRIEFS



ECRC RECEIVES COMMUNITY SALUTE AWARD

In November, the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce honored the ECRC with a Community Salute Award. Everything we do at the ECRC is for the purpose of improving our community, so being recognized for outstanding community service is particularly meaningful.

Real, lasting community improvement starts with our youngest children. At a 2013 U.S. Chamber of Commerce meeting, Brian Maher, CEO of Maher Terminals, gave a speech embracing "Birth to five" learning. He said that "early childhood education is not an entitlement, it's an investment in the future." We could not agree more! For the past fifteen years, we've remained committed to investing in Stark County's youngest citizens.

We humbly thank the Chamber for recognizing our efforts.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE DISTRICT BOUTIQUE

The District Boutique in Green donated 20% of its March 3rd sales to the ECRC! Thanks for Sharing the Love, District Boutique. You've proven that a business can be both fashion-forward and caring at the same time. For more information on the District Boutique's unique, hand-selected women's clothing and accessories, visit lovethedistrict.com



EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

1718 CLEVELAND AVENUE NORTHWEST
CANTON, OHIO 44703

ecresourcecenter.org

OUR MISSION

In the spirit of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, the mission of the Early Childhood Resource Center is to promote the healthy development of young children by improving the quality of their early education and care through comprehensive programming, resources, and support services for families and early childhood professionals, to be leaders and advocates at the state level, and to promote the professionalism of the early childhood field.

CENTER HOURS

Monday	12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Tues., Wed. & Thurs.	8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Friday	8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

The Center is closed on weekends.

ECRC has chosen to print responsibly on recycled paper.

Continued from page 1

ready to learn and will remain on the path to success. Programs like SPARK are particularly effective precisely because they directly engage and invest parents in their children's learning. Other ECRC programs similarly cultivate parent engagement by offering family educational programs and parenting education courses that stress the importance of parents engaging in learning right alongside their children.

The wonderful thing is that once a parent becomes engaged in the learning process, the parent is likely to remain engaged and invested in the child's education. The Annie E. Casey Foundation calls this a "Two-Generation Approach," citing the importance of "creating opportunity for families by addressing the needs of parents and their children simultaneously so that both can succeed together."³

This Two-Generation Approach plants seeds that yield benefits for generations, thereby transforming our entire community. ♦

"Early childhood programs pay dividends for life. We see savings as early as kindergarten, reduced burdens on the schools. We see savings in the teenage years. We see a direct link to higher adult productivity and self-sufficiency."

— James Heckman (Nobel Laureate in Economics)

NOTES:

¹www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/3/19%20school%20disadvantage%20isaacs/0319_school_disadvantage_isaacs.pdf

²www.childrenofthecode.org/interviews/rolnick.htm

³www.aecf.org/blog/learn-more-a-collection-of-resources-on-two-generation-approaches