



Vision Statement:

In the North Branch area, every young child will be cherished as a member of a healthy family and a member of the community. Our children will be engaged and supported in their growth and development, and valued as an important citizen. Each family will feel connected to the community, knowledgeable about available resources within the community and empowered to access those resources regardless of their economic level.

Priority Areas identified by the community at the January 2004 Visioning Session:

1. Improve communications for early childhood opportunities.

- ❖ Developing a web site to include a comprehensive listing of early childhood resources, services, and opportunities. Parenting information and tips will also be included as well as links to additional helpful sites for more suggestions.
- ❖ Expand web site to include links to United Way's Bee Hive, area child care centers, CCR&R, county agencies and services, etc.
- ❖ Consistently update and highlight events in the community, including speakers, classes, and family events.
- ❖ Promote the web site through news releases, printed materials, monthly advertisements, etc.

2. Educate young parents.

- ❖ We have purchased 40 Wall Mounting Poster frames to be given to local businesses to act as a permanent display for parenting information and upcoming opportunities for parent education provided by various programs and agencies.
- ❖ Inserts will be developed and updated monthly.
- ❖ An early childhood teacher will visit local, in-home child care provider to provide training and activity suggestions to emphasize the importance of developing school readiness skills in children. Materials developed for the Let's Get Wild About Reading/United Way events will continue to be used and distributed.

3. Provide indoor or drop-in recreation for families with young children.

- ❖ Promote "open" time for the community use of this space. We will be scheduling volunteers from local agencies and programs to work during the community use time.
- ❖ Purchase some instructional supplies to use with this space.
- ❖ Families Out and About Adventures" program to provide further recreation for area families. Grant funds will be used to offset the cost of 1 or 2 of the trips of each series to encourage participation.
- ❖ We also plan to meet with local planning committees responsible for park and playground purchases to advocate for the unique needs of the birth to 5-year-old group and their parents.
- ❖ Support an early childhood teacher to staff the indoor space one night per week of programming (26 weeks) to provide free access to the space for families.

4. Access for all preschoolers to literacy-based education/ A literacy campaign.

- ❖ Purchased and distributed over 700 children's books at the local library, at community concerts, at our early childhood coalition booth at a community festival, at the local WIC sites, immunization clinics, and the food pantry. (2004)

- ❖ We have purchased and developed book bins to include a variety of books for families to read while waiting for appointments. Also in these bins there are take-home tips on promoting language skills and information on the needs of young children and families.
- ❖ Purchased some simple computer games with an emphasis on literacy to be available for children's use at the new library.
- ❖ Approximately 1000 Coupons "Good for a free book to be picked up at the new library" distributed to all children in child care (homes and centers), local private and public preschool programs, and ECFE programs.
- ❖ Partnered with ECFE to host a United Way Raising Smarter Children event entitled, "Let's Get Wild About Reading": 3 events with literacy information and activities, dinner, free books, a concert, etc.: June-118, July 180, August-120. Child care providers attending the event could receive up to 10 new books at each event. About 550 books given away.
- ❖ Partnered with Community Education and the local Chamber during the Concerts In the Park series of community concerts. Local leaders read aloud a story at each of the six concerts and fifty copies of the featured story were distributed to families. 300 books given away.
- ❖ Donated \$400 to the library to reduce outstanding fines for families with young children.
- ❖ Provides children's books to be distributed at the library each time a child opens a new account.
- ❖ 200 children's books donated to Santa Anonymous 2005

5. Increase Funding.

- ❖ Build relationships with our local elected officials and legislators by extending invitations to our coalition meetings, occasionally sending them copies of meeting minutes, and notifying them of upcoming events highlighting the needs of young children and families.
- ❖ Rob Grunewald of the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank spoke at our local chamber luncheon in April 2006 on the value of investing in young children. About 100 in attendance.
- ❖ Karen Kingsley, Ready 4 K provided advocacy training for the 19 coalition members on April 21, 2006.
- ❖ Coalition members attended local precinct caucuses and submitted resolutions on behalf of young children.
- ❖ Letters were sent to local legislators emphasizing the importance of increasing funds to early childhood services.
- ❖ Coalition members wrote messages to our legislators and the governor to be delivered by families in the early childhood programs during the Voices for Children Day at the capital.
- ❖ Ready 4K postcards were distributed at the spring meetings to encourage our legislators to action.
- ❖ The coalition submitted questions related to early childhood to local candidate forums.

Other accomplishments:

- ❖ A coalition member volunteered her talents and designed a pamphlet outlining the purpose of the coalition, the identified priority areas, and the planned projects. This tool has been valuable as coalition member's present information to local groups and civic organizations on our local coalition, the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative, and the unique needs of young children and families.
- ❖ Participated in local community celebrations: a float in the Midsummer Parade, a booth at the Concerts in the Park series (2004), a booth at the Fall Harvest Festival (2004), participated in two Family Fun Nights (2005), a booth at the Community EXPO (2005), Concerts in the Park (2006), booth at the Baby & Toddler EXPO (2006). At each of these events we provided a fun activity for children to participate in, as well as distributed books, information on the coalition and parenting education opportunities.
- ❖ Tried a monthly opportunity for local businesses to sponsor an advertisement highlighting the upcoming coalition meeting and events. The sponsoring business was asked to have an adult representative be photographed with a young child from his/her life—perhaps a son, daughter, niece, nephew, neighbor or grandchild. This same adult was asked to respond to the question, "What do you want for our children?" This response, the photograph, the business name, and the coalition meeting information were part of the advertisement.