

## Clinton County Great Start raising funds for scholarships

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CLINTON COUNTY - The Clinton Great Start announced that it has raised \$10,000 in private and public donations to help approximately 11 low-income families afford quality child care and preschool for their 3-year-old sons and daughters.

The highest-need 4-year-olds in Michigan are often enrolled in the state's preschool program, called Great Start Readiness, or the federally-funded Head Start preschool program. However, research shows that two years of a high quality early learning experience often result in greater outcomes and school readiness for children with greatest risks.

In July, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, which operates 54 Great Start Collaboratives statewide, awarded 29 collaboratives a total of \$2.7 million in grants to establish a local Great Start fund in their community. The Clinton Great Start was awarded \$10,000.

The collaboratives were then challenged to raise an equal amount from public and private donors and use the money on scholarships for low-income 3-year-olds.

To date, collaboratives statewide have raised \$3,048,100 in matching funds, with 20 meeting or surpassing their original fundraising goal. A total of 813 children have received scholarships statewide.

Karen Black, GSC director, is thankful for the opportunity to offer the preschool scholarships.

"The parents were so excited when they found out that their child's preschool tuition was going to be paid for by the scholarship."

Research has shown that participation in early learning and development programs increases the chances of life success for children while cutting government costs and stimulating local, state and national economies.

In Michigan, the cost to access high quality early learning and development programs is often prohibitive for families. The average cost for a full-time infant or young child in a family child care home or center in Michigan is between \$6,400 and \$8,900, according to a study by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.