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Michigan's Great Start Collaboratives raise more than \$3 million for early learning scholarships

More than 800 vulnerable kids will get a second crucial year of quality child care and preschool

LANSING – The Early Childhood Investment Corp. (ECIC) today announced that 29 Great Start Collaboratives across the state have raised more than \$3 million in private and public donations to help more than 800 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 (GSRP), 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.

ECIC operates 54 Great Collaboratives statewide that serve as the local infrastructure for the Great Start initiative, bringing together parent leaders and community decision-makers from diverse sectors - education, business, clergy, law enforcement etc. - to create and implement a local plan to foster school readiness.

In July, ECIC awarded 29 collaboratives a total of \$2.7 million in grants – ranging from \$3,000 to the Ionia County Great Start Collaborative on up to \$400,000 to the Kent Great Start Collaborative - to establish a local Great Start fund in their community.

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. A total of 813 children have received scholarships statewide.

To date, the collaboratives have raised \$3,048,100 in matching funds, with 20 meeting or surpassing their original fundraising goal.

“This challenge opportunity has done exactly what it was intended to do and more,” said Karen Roback, director of the Great Start Child Care Quality Program for the ECIC. “Hundreds of children have access to two years of a quality early learning experience in addition to communities creating local early childhood funds that will sustain other early childhood efforts down the road.”

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.

In the last four years, Michigan's Great Start Collaboratives and ECIC have leveraged over \$25 million in funds for early childhood from public and private sources.

The matching grants were awarded following a proposal process to those collaboratives that met specific funding criteria and had a demonstrated history of strong performance, according to ECIC.

For a full list of local awards, number of children receiving scholarships and local contacts, please see the attached documents.

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The Early Childhood Investment Corporation is a public/private initiative working to restructure Michigan's investment in children from birth to five through state and local community efforts. For more information about ECIC and its efforts, visit <http://greatstartforkids.org/>