

Advocating for Iowa's Young Children and their Families

"This is the true joy in life. Being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, and being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live, it is a privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die; for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no 'brief candle' for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it to future generations." By George Bernard Shaw

In a message recently presented to the Early Childhood Core Stakeholders group, Ted Stilwill, Director of the Department of Education, said "Being an early childhood advocate is not a spectator sport, meant to be watched on television." Community Empowerment is taking that message to heart.

The Iowa Empowerment Board

The Iowa Empowerment Board further developed and refined their Leadership Agenda for FY 2004. They have developed action plans for each strategy in the agenda. The Board also adopted an individual board commitment form whereby members make a concerted effort to do something above and beyond attending the regularly-scheduled Iowa Empowerment Board meetings. Items on the commitment form included to attend the Early Care, Health and Education Congress, to visit a Community Empowerment Area Board meeting, to make a presentation to a local, state or national group, etc. The Board has made a commitment to meet every other month beginning in 2004 in order to become more involved in advocating for Iowa's young children and their families.

Board members represent Community Empowerment with other initiatives. Currently members are actively serving on the Iowa Learns Council, Iowa's Early Learning Standards Committee, the Iowa Urban Education Network's study project on Financing an Early Care, Health and Education System, local Community Empowerment Boards, the Quality Child Care Task Force, the State Maternal/Child Healthy Advisory Board, the Muscatine Healthy Association, the board member for the Iowa Child Care and Education NetWork and a community Youth Task Force Committee.

Statewide Early Childhood Advocacy Committee

Along with joining efforts to support the Early Care, Health and Education Congress, Community Empowerment is involved with a statewide Early Childhood Advocacy Committee. The committee jointly hosts the Footsteps to Iowa's Future, Early Care, Health and Education Day on the Hill. In February 2003 over 100 early childhood advocates met with legislators and staff to share their message.

The Advocacy Committee also promotes Tuesdays for Tots, an electronic advocacy campaign. Each week a message about the need for quality programming for young children will be sent to advocates electronically which can be forwarded to legislators. The consistency, frequency, and urgency of the messages will help shape the discussions about quality programming for Iowa's youngest children.



Early Childhood Advocates Come Together at the Capitol

February 5, 2003



Sen. Kibbie with Building Families Empowerment Area

Early childhood advocates created a strong voice for Iowa's youngest citizens while at the Capitol on February 5, 2003. Over 55 displays and many delegates from across the state shared their message about the importance of supporting early childhood investment in our state.



Sen. Iverson with Story County Empowerment Area

on request for support of:

Legislators listened to community folks as the message focused



Rep. Frevert with Lakes Empowerment Area

- ✓ Restoration of the reduction in the Child Care Resource and Referral line item;
- ✓ Continued support to the Shared Visions pre-school programs at a current level,
- ✓ Current funding levels for Community Empowerment initiative;
- ✓ Protect Iowa's Children Check-off for the 2004 Iowa income

tax return; and

- ✓ The creation of the Children's First Endowment Fund; a permanent endowment for early childhood education and health.

Comments from the early childhood advocates:



Rep. Hanson with Corner Counties Empowerment Area

"I think that the Day on the Hill/Empowerment day is VERY productive with the legislators.

No one in this State lobbies for ALL the children in Iowa because they do not carry the votes. I met with at least 7 or 8 legislators from my area or others and all of them could not dispute what I had to tell them and ALL seemed supportive of our efforts."



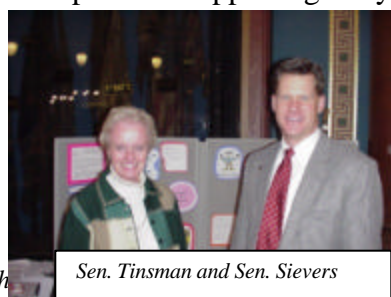
Rep. Whitaker with Mahaska Wapello Empowerment Area

"I think it is more impressive with a variety of early childhood displays rather than just empowerment. I also think the legislators are more aware that we are at the capitol."

Overall, it was a positive day at the Capitol for supporting early childhood initiatives in Iowa.



Rep. Foege with Boost 4 Families Empowerment Area



Sen. Tinsman and Sen. Sievers



Sen. Schuerer with Jefferson/Keokuk County Empowerment Area

Footsteps to Iowa's Future

Children truly provide the footsteps to Iowa's future. Advocates of quality early care, health, and education have the opportunity to help shape the path for those footsteps. Important issues at the state and federal level that impact children and their families will be debated again this year. The Day on the Hill will provide the kick-off of on-going activities in support of quality early care, health and education. Plan to attend to show our law makers and state leaders that children deserve our attention and that investments in early care, health and education will produce great returns.

Day on the Hill

Tuesday, February 3, 2004 Hotel Fort Des Moines
Featured speaker is Dr. Abby Thorman, Director of the Metropolitan Council on Child Care at Mid-America Regional Council, a think tank and change catalyst for the implementation of an early learning system in Greater Kansas City and the states of Kansas and Missouri.

Wednesday,
February 4, 2004 Advocates will convene at the Capitol to make a powerful statement through individual appointments with legislators and informative displays highlighting early childhood program successes around the state.

There will be an exclusive State Capitol tour for higher education students, which will familiarize them with the workings of the Capitol and provide an opportunity to see government at work.

Each early childhood group will have a display on this day around the rotunda of the Capitol. We will be working together to inform legislators of the wonderful things that are happening for young children and why it needs to happen for every child!

Tuesdays for Tots

Each Tuesday E-Advocacy
(During Legislative session) Each week a message about the need for quality programming for young children will be sent to advocates electronically which can be forwarded to legislators. The consistency, frequency, and urgency of the messages will help shape the discussions about quality programming for Iowa's youngest children.

[For more information, please call the Iowa Child Care and Early Education Network, 515-883-1206](tel:515-883-1206)