



## **A message from United Way of Central Ohio and Start Smart December 2006**

---

Keep it simple! Start Smart urges parents and caregivers to “love, listen, read and sing” when caring for very young children. Truly, it is the simple things we do, such as singing to babies, which fosters early learning.

Start Smart is the early care and learning initiative led by Franklin County and the United Way of Central Ohio. The initiative is improving early care on several levels, including outreach to parents and caregivers through free materials that help with ideas for early learning and activities centered on the easy, every day moments with children.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of this past year, we wanted to update you on some recent accomplishments. For the first time this fall Start Smart held a breakfast event to update community leaders and stakeholders on the initiative’s progress. During the meeting, we were pleased to show a new video about Start Smart, generously donated by AEP. If you would like a DVD copy, please call the Start Smart helpline at 237-6278 and request one.

In addition to reviewing our progress to date, the event also set the stage for the continuing service that Start Smart will provide. As one of our premier community initiatives, Start Smart is making measurable and lasting improvements to early care and education in Franklin County. Read on for some updates on Start Smart’s progress in some critical areas that affect the lives of local babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

**Accreditation:** Child care centers and homes that are nationally accredited offer the highest standards of early care and education. Start Smart helps child care providers with the intense and demanding work that it takes to earn accreditation status.

Of Franklin County ***home providers***, currently **25** are working toward accreditation and **13** have earned the distinction.

Of Franklin County ***centers***, currently **45** are working toward accreditation and **89** have earned the award.

***The average national percent of accredited centers is 8% in metro areas. Franklin County exceeds that average with 20 percent of child care centers now accredited.***

**Credentialing & Training:** Start Smart reimburses early childhood workers who have successfully completed coursework in child development at local universities and colleges.

To date, **1,176** single class scholarships have been awarded. **13** early childhood students have earned a Bachelor's degree, **49** earned an Associate's degree and **19** earned a Child Development Association national credential. **One** student has earned a Master's degree. Many more are on a course toward a degree.

***Director's Institute:*** In addition, **244** child care center directors have attended an "Institute" of special trainings designed to provide advanced instruction on early childhood curriculum and center management.

And the ***Home Providers Institute*** has welcomed **66** home providers for advanced training.

**Building Capacity in Homes and Centers:** For the parents of babies and toddlers, quality child care spaces are few and waiting lists are long. Start Smart is increasing capacity in centers and in home settings. To date, **353** new homes have started the business of quality early care, creating **706** new spaces. In addition, **104** infant and toddler spaces in child care centers have been constructed, equipped, and subsidized through Start Smart.

**Community Awareness & Parent Education:** Materials to help parents with creative ideas for learning activities are available for free from Start Smart. A web site includes more than 100 activity tips, a calendar of events, parenting links and a directory of local services for children. Visit **[www.startsmartcolumbus.org](http://www.startsmartcolumbus.org)** to learn more. More than **35,000** booklets of activity tips have been distributed. Booklets are available in English, Spanish and Somali. Call **23-SMART** to request a booklet.

Start Smart also partnered with the United Way of America to offer parent education materials from Born Learning. This program is comprehensive, giving parents the tools they need to enrich their child's life, birth to five years. Born Learning focuses on everyday, teachable moments that parents and caregivers enjoy with their children. Start Smart has distributed over 10,000 packets of parent education materials within the community. In addition, workshops have been conducted to both community professionals and parents to grow aware and utilize the Born Learning materials. These programs have been developed and implemented in conjunction with Franklin County.

**Funding:** Start Smart is funded through public and private sources. To date, \$4,114,556 has been provided through county and state funds. Private sources have donated \$5,954,216. Thank you to our Funders and supporters!

***Find out more!!***

Please visit Start Smart online at **[www.startsmartcolumbus.org](http://www.startsmartcolumbus.org)**. To receive a free Start Smart activity tips booklet & Born Learning materials, please call **614-BE-SMART or 614-237-6278**.