



## INVESTING IN YOUNG CHILDREN: *Collaboration for Change*

“Great Beginnings” is Marion County’s initiative to promote healthy social and emotional development in children, ages zero to five. Over 25 organizations have joined forces to integrate innovative and effective early interventions, enrichment models and family-strengthening policies into their practices. “If programs and policies can increase the percentage of intelligent, empathetic, productive members of our society and decrease

the percentage requiring special education, mental health, child welfare, child protective and juveniles justice services, it is clearly in the best interest of our society,” states the Child Trauma Academy.

Everything done through Great Beginnings is aimed toward educating our community on healthy child development practices and strategies to combat the effects of unhealthy environments.

The work of Great Beginnings is focused around five essential areas: Family, Early Learning, Community, Health and Court Partnerships. Some achievements to date are as

follows:

### Family

- Increased the availability of research-based parenting classes

### Early Learning

- Partnered with Chemeketa Community College and Department of Human Services (DHS) to train unlicensed DHS and community-based child-care providers on healthy child development and best practices
- Launched *Reading for All! Born Learning*, an early literacy initiative

- Surveyed local kindergarten teachers on social and emotional readiness of children

### Community

- Partnered with United Way to launch Born Learning campaign and website

### Health

- Trained local pediatricians on infant-toddler the Ages and Stages assessment tool

### Court Partnerships

- Added social and emotional development language to temporary custody judgment order

### Did You Know...

- The brain is the least developed organ at birth
- 90% of the brain’s growth occurs from birth until age five
- Healthy interaction “smart wires” the brain for learning
- Responsiveness to a babies’ needs builds security, trust and attachment
- Reading and talking to infants, even before they can understand, helps create connections that form the foundation for learning

## *Prevention is a Good Investment!*

Learning doesn’t start on the first day of kindergarten, but years earlier when the child’s brain first begins to develop. The entire community has a stake in healthy brain development. Investing in early childhood development and supporting parents and caregivers will result in significant long-term savings and a stronger, more viable workforce.

We know that making early investments is critical to our communities’ economic vital-

ity and livability. Marion County’s low ranking in many of the 2007 Oregon Progress Board’s benchmarks illustrates the urgent local need. Marion County ranked 36<sup>th</sup> out of 36 counties in 3rd grade reading, 31<sup>st</sup> in teen pregnancy, 33<sup>rd</sup> in high school dropouts and 30<sup>th</sup> in juvenile arrests, just to name a few.

**\$1 invested in comprehensive prenatal care saves \$8.21 in later health costs**

**\$1 invested in childhood immunizations saves \$24.30 in childhood illness and death from illness**

**\$1 invested in quality preschool education saves \$17.00 in later special education, crime, welfare and other costs**

**\$1 invested in home visits for high-risk pregnant women saves \$13.68 in obstetrical, neonatal and pediatric costs**

*Source: Our Nation’s Children—The Future is in Our Hands*

## *Partnering Organizations*

Marion County Children and Families Commission has brought together the following partners to work collaboratively on its Great Beginnings Consortium:

Chemeketa Community College  
Catholic Community Services  
Easter Seals Children's Therapy Center  
Family Building Blocks  
Marion County Healthy Start  
Child Care Information Services, MWVCAA  
Childhood Health Associates of Salem  
Head Start, MWVCAA  
Marion County Courts  
Marion County Health Department  
Mid-Valley Independent Physicians Association  
Oregon Department of Human Services  
Salem-Keizer Even Start  
Salem-Keizer Head Start  
Silverton Together  
United Way  
Valley Mental Health  
Willamette Education Service District  
Withnell Motor Corporation  
YMCA



*Moving forward — embracing the opportunity to change the course of children's health.*



**"From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life. It is during this time that the brain undergoes its most dramatic growth, and children acquire the ability to think, speak, learn and reason. Early experiences can and do influence the physical architecture of the brain, literally shaping the neural connections in an infant's developing brain."**

Cohen, Onunaku, Clothier and Poppe, September 2005