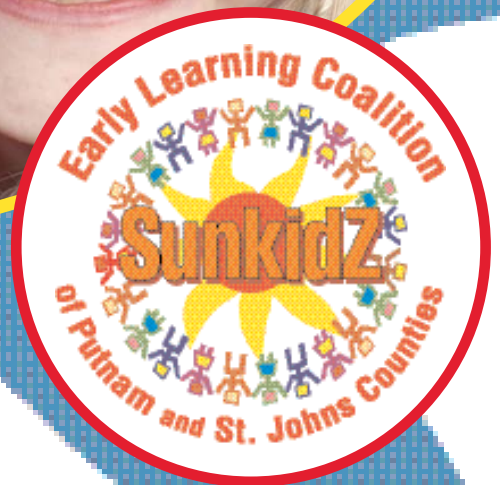


Annual Report 2006-2007



Introduction

Letter From the Chair

This past year has been both busy and exciting serving as Board Chair for the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Putnam and St. Johns Counties. Prior to 2005, each county had its own Coalition. This is the second fiscal year since the Putnam County Coalition merged with the St. Johns County Coalition to serve a minimum of 2,000 school readiness children combined. The merging of coalitions included merging of boards and committees which afforded the coalition additional staff to support the operations and increase efficiencies. Prior to the merger, there were two staff, an executive director and a fiscal director.

The staff is now led by a new executive director, Dawn E. Bell. Her team has a full time Fiscal Director, an Office Manager, a Quality Assurance/Contracts Coordinator, as well as a PERKS Technical Assistance Specialist who also works with the contracts coordinator on quality assurance. The team has been able to closely monitor all contractual relationships quarterly and keep the full board up-to-date with community achievements.

At the beginning of the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the ELC went through the formal procurement process combining services for both counties. This process contributed to a substantial cost savings benefit. The ELC of Putnam and St. Johns Counties provided services to the children of the counties via subsidized childcare, school based programs, home visitation programs, early education programs, including infant toddler, inclusion and resource and referral services. The Coalition has maintained and updated its School Readiness Provider agreement to ensure minimum quality standards in school readiness settings. Through this agreement and required training, providers have a greater awareness of the importance of quality programs and the requirements set forth in statute.

The Coalition has built strong relationships with its local providers, referring partners, civic groups, and local businesses. The Coalition's theme this past year has been literacy. We have had an interesting year and we look forward to strengthening and enhancing programs in the future. I consider it an honor to be serving as Chair of this organization.

Sincerely,



Nancy R. Pearson, Chair

MISSION

To provide leadership to the communities of Putnam and St. Johns Counties in preparing children for school by enhancing early learning programs through a seamless delivery system with a focus on nurturing our children, our families, our providers, our communities, and our future, with the overall goal of making a positive difference.

VISION

All children, birth to five, will have access to efficient, integrated early learning programs and services which are designed to meet developmentally appropriate standards and performance outcome measures to ensure they enter school ready to learn.

The Coalition contracted with the following agencies during 2006-2007:

Episcopal Children's Services, Inc.

ECS serves as the Coalition's Primary Services Provider and offers program support services for school readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten providers in the entire service delivery area. This agency also provides Child Care Resource and Referral services, Inclusion services and Quality Initiatives.

Putnam County School District

The school district provided School Based Education Programs, including Pre-K Early Intervention and Migrant services.

Each subcontractor submits monthly programmatic activity reports that are included in the board materials and reviewed by the full body.



Number of Children Served with School Readiness Childcare Slot Funding

Putnam County Children Served Average Year to Date:

	Protective Services	Cash Assistance	Transitional Child Care	Income Eligible	Total
Infant	13	12	5	38	68
Toddler	19	10	10	84	123
2 year olds	19	12	11	97	139
Pre-K 3	14	11	7	124	157
Pre-K 4	14	12	7	125	158
Pre-K 5	13	11	7	125	156
School Age	25	31	20	370	446
Special Needs	0	0	0	0	0
Total	118	99	68	962	1246

St. John's County Children Served Average Year to Date:

	Protective Services	Cash Assistance	Transitional Child Care	Income Eligible	Total
Infant	11	17	4	15	48
Toddler	17	12	8	52	89
2 year olds	25	19	10	85	139
Pre-K 3	14	20	6	86	127
Pre-K 4	14	20	6	85	126
Pre-K 5	14	20	7	86	127
School Age	64	24	11	83	182
Special Needs	1	0	0	2	2
Total	160	134	51	494	838

The chart below shows the sum of children served through TCC in 2006-2007.

	Putnam County TCC	St. John's County TCC
Infants	59	49
Toddlers	117	92
2's	134	115
3's	89	72
4's	88	76
5's	88	78
School Age	238	134
Special Needs	0	0
Total	813	616

The Coalition served an average of 1,246 children throughout the year in Putnam County and 838 children in St. Johns County. Enrollment stabilized during the past year, with less peaks and valleys than in previous years.

In June 2007, there were no children on the wait list for child care assistance in Putnam County and 723 were on the wait list for child care assistance in St. Johns County. Additional funds are needed to serve more children who are priority in accordance with F.S. Chapter 411.01.

As of June 2007, of all children ages birth through 12 receiving subsidized care in the Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties, only 5.7% were infants. This is because there are fewer providers serving infants and because the Coalition has set a priority to serve children who will soon be going to school. Through our 2006 Community Needs Assessment, the accessibility and availability of infant/toddler care was identified as a Coalition priority and continues to be a priority for the upcoming year although the percentage of infants served in 2007 increased by over 30%.

FLKRS Results

In the Fall of 2005, 1,779 children entering kindergarten in the St. Johns County School

District were screened using the ECHOS (Early Childhood Observation System) and DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). Of those screened with the ECHOS, 54% were consistently demonstrating skills, 38% were emerging/progressing, and only 8% were not yet demonstrating. These results are well above the state average shown below. The letter naming section of the DIBELS showed 70% of children above average, 12% low risk, 10% moderate risk and 8% high risk. The initial sound section of the DIBELS showed 55% of children above average, 18% low risk, 16% moderate risk and 11% high risk. Again, these results are well above the state average.

In Putnam County, 902 children entering kindergarten were screened by the school district using the ECHOS and DIBELS. Of those screened with the ECHOS, 36% of children were consistently demonstrating skills, 47% were emerging/progressing, and 17% were not yet demonstrating. The letter naming section of the DIBELS showed 46% above average, 14% low risk, 19% moderate risk and 21% high risk. The initial sound section of the DIBELS

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Programs

(continued from page 3)

showed 47% above average, 16% low risk, 19% moderate risk and 19% high risk. These results are somewhat lower than the state average shown below. In order to ensure that more children will be ready for school in future years, more providers will be targeted to participate in our accreditation/enrichment program and more providers will be offered technical assistance. Providers will also be encouraged to attend early literacy trainings and initiatives that will take place over the course of the year.

The state average of the ECHOS shows 42% consistently demonstrating skills, 44% emerging/progressing skills, 14% not yet demonstrating. The letter naming section of the DIBELS showed 56% above average, 14% low risk, 14% moderate risk and 16% high risk. The initial sound section of the DIBELS showed 44% above average, 19% low risk, 19% moderate risk and 18% high risk.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) programs were implemented by the Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties in August 2005. The Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Education Standards were formally adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2005. This early learning guide describes what 4-year-old children should know and be able to do by the end of their pre-kindergarten year and is designed to guide instructors in developing and implementing appropriate early learning environments. It is of utmost importance that all VPK providers receive training on these standards. Therefore, on-going training on the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten standards has been identified as a Coalition priority. During 2006-2007, a total of 37 providers attended 5 VPK Standards Trainings. Parents are also trained on the standards through workshops provided at VPK sites.

Number of Children Served in VPK:
Putnam County: 455, St Johns County: 722

Best Practices/

Quality Initiatives:

Evening Meetings – Three evening meetings are held annually to accommodate the schedules of providers to receive their feedback, input and

address their concerns. Providers are recognized annually for their dedication to the early childhood field and for their involvement with the Coalition during Provider Appreciation week.

Annual Kids Rally and Reading Round Up –

During Kid's Week, providers are encouraged to participate in the annual hanging of the hands by sending in children's hand art work to Tallahassee serving as a symbolic reminder to the legislators of the children in Florida. Also as part of this event, Putnam County hosted the Reading on the River Event in which pre-school children from specific locations were invited to participate in a reading initiative. The children who participated received 1 free book and the teachers received a parent packet and lesson plans for 1 week. In St. Johns County providers of preschool children were invited to Webster Elementary school to listen to a storyteller. The children received a free book and the teacher received a parent packet and lesson plans for the week.

Born Learning – An ongoing program to promote early learning; baby's first books, developmental milestones books, literature on brain development, what to look for in choosing child care and other educational and promotional materials are distributed in diaper bags to every new mom at the hospitals in Putnam and St. Johns Counties.

Economy of Scale – Through a merging of county coalitions the organization has leveraged more staff to manage the day-to-day operations and expanded its programmatic and outreach efforts in the community and realized a cost savings on primary services contracts. The implementation of the VPK program has also provided some relief to the slot dollars used for school readiness services allowing more children to be served in the program.

Caring for Kids – Publish a quarterly newsletter for providers and parents to keep them apprised of school readiness and VPK initiatives, changes in legislation, and parenting activities/tips.

Helping Hands – A monthly newsletter is published and distributed to providers with articles and best practice information related to the environment, accreditation, transitions, inclusion, early literacy and infant/toddler development.

PERKS (Partners in Education and Research for Kindergarten Success) – Year One of Grant (2005-06): The PERKS program got off to a challenging start in the beginning largely

due to the late start in the program year. Fourteen teachers were recruited; however, many dropped out and for the majority of the year, only two remained in the program, and finally one teacher completed the program. This was largely due to the time crunch for recruiting and not being able to fully explain what was required of the VPK teachers who had agreed to participate. The remaining participant received a certificate of participation from PERKS, ongoing scholarship towards her AS degree, a \$250 gift certificate for teacher supplies, a subscription to an educational magazine and free children's books for her classroom. The pre- and post-test screening data of the participating VPK classroom and children has been received and passed on to the VPK teacher for her review.

Year Two of Grant (2006-07): The PERKS program carefully reviewed the challenges of year one and successfully prepared for year two. The technical assistance specialist attended training June - July 2006 and then began recruiting VPK teachers to participate in the program. Twelve were recruited (the required amount) and four center directors also chose to participate to receive TEACH Scholarships towards their pursuit to attain college degrees to meet the aspirational goals of VPK legislation.

Teachers and directors in the program attended the Palatka branch of St. Johns River Community College. Applications and registration forms for college courses and PERKS were completed and classes began in mid October 2006. The second term began in mid January 2007. As an incentive teacher/directors were offered an incentive of \$400 through TEACH to obtain three more credit hours either during or after the PERKS courses. Five teachers went on to receive the bonus and three others are in the process. Pre-testing began September 2006, then post-testing in May 2007. Technical assistance was given throughout the PERKS program year.

Program Changes:

VPK Implementation – We utilized several venues to promote and implement the Voluntary Pre-kindergarten Program last year. Some of our promotional venues included post card mailings, flyers distributed throughout the community, display banners, yard signs at childcare providers, PSA's and print advertisement to promote the program's availability. Many VPK provider meetings were held to recruit and inform providers about program requirements.



DOE Grant – Participated in DOE grant to fund a VPK regional facilitator to assist in program implementation and training.

Single Point of Entry/ Unified Wait List

The Primary Service Provider's CCR&R specialists engage parents in their child's education, making sure that parents understand the vital role they play. Information is provided to parents on childcare licensing, and how to contact their local licensing office. They are given assistance in understanding what school readiness is and what it means regarding the education of their child. Parents using the web-based Simplified Point of Entry are contacted for follow-up informational interviews. Each parent is also mailed a parent packet which is a model for the state that includes brochures describing how to choose child care, how to contact the Department of Children and Families Licensing Division, how to get help for special needs children, Kid Care insurance information, earned income credit information, and information pertaining to services available in the parents immediate area. Much of this information is available in both Spanish and English. Contact information is also included in a cover letter in the parent packet. The contact information for CCR&R is readily accessible to providers and employers by being advertised in the yellow pages and in the Chamber of Commerce membership directory. Brochures and posters are circulated throughout the year and are posted in healthcare offices, school-based, faith-based and private provider offices, real estate offices, libraries, and local businesses. The Coalition also sponsors a childcare directory, which advises parents of the goals of the coalition, childcare providers, and intake phone numbers.

The Primary Service Provider currently maintains and updates all school readiness providers through CMS/EFS. The Primary School Readiness Services Provider maintains a resource and referral specialist responsible for childcare provider database maintenance upon notification by DCF. The Primary Services Provider compares its EFS data to the list of DCF's existing licensed school readiness providers on a monthly basis and compiles a report on a semi-annual basis. Parents are surveyed according to NACCRRA standards to assure that parents are satisfied with the CCR&R process.

For those children receiving childcare assistance, a parent may choose any provider complying

with licensing requirements, registered and/or licensed exempt, and school readiness standards or an informal provider. Once a parent has chosen a provider, the parent informs the Family Service Specialist of their choice. A certificate/voucher is then printed and signed by the Specialist, the Provider and the Parent.

The voucher packet includes the signed application, voucher certificate and fee agreement. It also includes a parent letter, the document checklist, the Parent Fee Notification, Health Form, Immunization Record, Proof of Parental Identity, Terms and Conditions and the income worksheet. In order for the voucher payment for childcare services to be made the following is required: a) The voucher packet with all required forms has been completed and received by the Service Provider, b) The caregiver, if an informal caregiver, has completed the Family Day Care Course within 90 days of enrollment, c) The parent has called the Service Provider to notify them of the parent's choice of childcare program, d) The attendance roster has been received by the second working day of the following month of service and has been approved by the Service Provider.

Child Care Resource and Referral Service

The Coalition's primary service provider provides Child Care Resource and Referral services and ensures that parents are offered information about a choice of settings in legally operating programs: licensed, registered, religious-exempt, school-based and informal programs, including access through certificate options, as identified in the Standard Levels of Service available in the community, regardless of the family's income. For those families who are income-eligible, health or behavioral assessment referrals, childcare tuition assistance, and childcare teacher assistance is provided. Behavioral screening services are limited, and this deficiency is seen as an area of weakness, especially in today's society. All children in publicly funded programs are screened for physical development, and for vision, hearing and speech problems as needed. Screenings are available to children ineligible for school readiness services or on the wait list, but only by parent request.

Locally, the majority of our CCR&R calls fall under parent education. The second most frequent call comes from parents looking for

help, other than childcare. To aid in this second request, St. Johns County has compiled a comprehensive community resource guide. Staff also use the United Way online Resource Directories for both counties.

In an effort to assure our Coalition board members understand the Early Childhood community first-hand, they are asked to participate in early care and education provider site visits which are coordinated by coalition staff. The site visits assist our members with a deeper understanding of the needs, challenges and levels of program quality in their communities. coalition staff. The site visits assist our members with a deeper understanding of the needs, challenges and levels of program quality in their communities.

Children Served

Age Groups	Putnam	St. Johns	TOTAL
0 to 4 (COUNTY TOTAL)			
School Readiness	1,396	838	2084
Infants	68	48	115
Toddlers	123	89	212
2-year-olds	139	139	278
3-year-olds	157	126	283
4-year-olds	158	126	284
Head Start (3/4 year olds)	197	135	332
Putnam County School District 3/4-year-olds	150	0	150
PreK Migrant Children	186	0	186
5 to 9 (COUNTY TOTAL)			
5-year-olds	156	127	283
School Aged	446	182	627



Analysis

Staff Development/ Provider training and Community Coordination

Family Child Care Home Association

Scholarships – We awarded 23 Family Home Care providers scholarships to attend their State Conference.

Community Coordination

Community Events – The coalition participates in at least one community event per quarter. The quarterly events include the annual Belz Holiday Party, Annual Kids Rally and Reading Roundup, Ancient City Kids Day, Tribute to Kids and Family Child Care Provider Association's "Day in the Park."

Books for Bravery – At the Putnam County Health Department, donated books are given to the immunization nurse to give each child receiving immunizations. Before this initiative, the nurse was purchasing books on her own because she felt so strongly about the positive outcomes of early literacy.

Florida Transition Project – A TRACK Team (Transitional Advisory Council for Kids) was established in Putnam County to ensure that a comprehensive, community-based, community driven system is in place to transition pregnant women, children and their families from one service provider to another. The major goals of the project was to address transition issues on a community-wide basis through the formalization of transition policies and procedures, to increase awareness of issues, policies, procedures, laws and regulations that impact infant and early child transitions, to provide technical assistance and support to the community, and to develop an interagency agreement for sharing of information.

Tribute To Kids – This is an annual event sponsored by Communities In Schools. This year's family activity was for children and adults to make a bookmark and distribute information on services.

Annual Kid's Rally and Reading Round Up –

This event is the model for community collaboration. The Coalition and Episcopal Children's Services work with other local groups to promote literacy in a fun-filled,

learning environment. This year's event, held at Ravine Gardens State Park, had several stations that each child moved through to include a lesson on "Don't Teach Your Trash to Swim" and a "Local Aquifer Model" presented by the Water Management Team in Putnam County.

UWADA (United Way Agency Directors Association)

– A group of community service and United Way funded agencies sharing information and resources, and developing community goals to improve systems. Currently, the St. Johns County UWADA is working on a collaborative economic impact study to demonstrate the level of impact the not-for-profit sector has on the community.

Putnam County Shared Services Meeting –

A group of community service and United Way funded agencies sharing information and resources, and developing community goals to improve systems.

Additionally, ECS updated the St. Johns Community Resource Guide and published for the first time the Putnam County Resource Guide which is distributed to parents throughout the region. Many other local agencies are requesting copies as well. These resource guides will help families locate other needed services such as food pantries, health services and even finding out where to register to vote.

Fiscal Deficits/ Dis-enrollment

As reflected in the financial section of the annual report, the Coalition utilized 89% of the total budget and did not sustain a fiscal deficit. Fortunately, the Coalition was not faced with dis-enrollment issues.

Wait List Issues/Specialized Policy/Program at local level to reduce waiting lists

On June 30, there were 723 children on the wait list in St. Johns County and 0 in Putnam County.

Other

Placed ads in the Putnam Chamber Directory and St. Johns County Relocation Guide to

notify the community and newcomers that we have quality child care resource and referral services and preparatory programs for children entering into the educational system, and to inform the community that there is an active group of citizens who are serving as liaisons to the community in terms of bringing resources together to help increase both the professionalism and quality of child care in their community.

Program Issues

- The Coalition's Program Oversight Committee and Primary Services Staff collaborate with the local licensing agents to ensure that local providers offer quality services in a healthy and safe environment.
- Issues of providers not in compliance with the provider agreement are reviewed by the Program Committee and/or given technical assistance or placed on probation.
- The Coalition is experiencing shortages of care in certain care levels (infants) and in certain locations. Provider rates paid by the Coalition have not increased in several years and this is adding to the provider shortage. Even in areas where providers are plentiful, many require parents to pay the difference in the Coalition rate and their private pay rate, making care unaffordable to School Readiness families. However, with flat funding for the past several years, we can not give the providers a rate increase without serving fewer children than our mandate requires.
- The Coalition's plan includes coaching and one-on-one technical assistance with providers to increase positive outcomes for children. We have found this approach very successful where teacher stability is maintained. However, teacher turnover due to low pay continues to be a challenge.



Financial Report

The Coalition receives funding through the Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning, which includes state and federal funds. Local governments and the United Way of St. Johns County also contribute match funding exclusively for slots in the working poor category and the Child Care Purchasing Pool. Below is a summary of budget and actual expenditures for fiscal year 2006-2007.

Program Administration expenses capture the costs related to administering the school readiness program in the coalition's service area. These included, but were not limited to, costs associated with contracted administrative services vendors, fiscal agent services, CPA audit fees, insurance, operating supplies, equipment costs, and similar items.

Non-Direct Services captures the costs related to services necessary to implement the early learning programs such as eligibility determination and monitoring. These include child care subsidy enrollment eligibility determination and re-determination.

Quality Initiatives budget captures expenses related to providing curriculum support, provider staff development coordination, community outreach, natal bags for both Putnam and St. Johns Counties, and enhancement materials for the resource lab/lending library and direct enhancements for classrooms.

Inclusion Services captures the costs related to services to include children with special needs into the traditional classroom with mainstream children.

Infant and Toddler Services captures expenses related to quality initiatives directed to children who are infants through two years of age.

Child Care Slots captures the expenses associated with providing tuition assistance for every child enrolled in the school readiness program. These expenses were paid to providers in the form of monthly reimbursements once proper documentation was submitted to verify attendance of school readiness children in their care.

Administrative

- Approved revisions/updates to policies and procedures in place
- Updated the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
- Adopted Sliding Fee Scales based on current federal poverty guidelines for Putnam and St. Johns Counties
- Revised priority of services to serve both counties

	Budget	Actual	% of Budget
School Readiness (SR)			
Program Administration	\$400,096	\$400,082	3.23%
Non-Direct Services	375,195	358,104	2.89%
Eligibility	275,679	246,841	1.99%
Quality Initiatives	637,874	630,507	5.09%
Infant & Toddler Services	132,318	131,843	1.07%
Inclusion Services	20,606	20,248	.16%
Resource and Referral	123,475	121,990	.99%
SR Child Care Slots	6,069,275	5,994,030	48.4%
TOTAL SR	\$8,034,518	\$7,903,644	63.8%
Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)			
Program Administration	125,670	80,590	.65%
Non-Direct	81,236	66,548	.54%
Slots	4,138,111	2,966,776	23.97%
TOTAL VPK	\$4,345,017	\$3,113,914	25.15%
TOTAL Budget (SR & VPK)	\$12,379,535	\$11,017,558	89%

Summary

The Early Learning Coalition of Putnam and St. Johns Counties has made great strides in improving outcomes for children. We have made many quality improvements for children, providers, and programs over the past years through quality/program enhancements, professional development training, community outreach and public relations.

There is strong and cohesive collaboration among contractors, board members, and community-based organizations in our community. Many civic organizations and local businesses collaborate well with the community and school district to provide needed services, educational award programs, and additional funding to support and enhance current programs.

ELC of Putnam and St. Johns Counties has made substantial gains in quality child care throughout the community with the continued use of the school readiness provider agreement. Even if a provider only serves one school readiness child, the quality improvements benefit all the children in the setting, not just those receiving subsidies; therefore, raising the bar of quality care in our community for all children.

The Coalition receives many thank you notes and calls throughout the year from providers directly impacted by professional development training, scholarships, and quality initiatives, as well as its community partners. They are thankful for enhancement materials provided by the Coalition. Community

partners are thankful for the information and collaboration received, as well as participation in local events and training.

Putnam

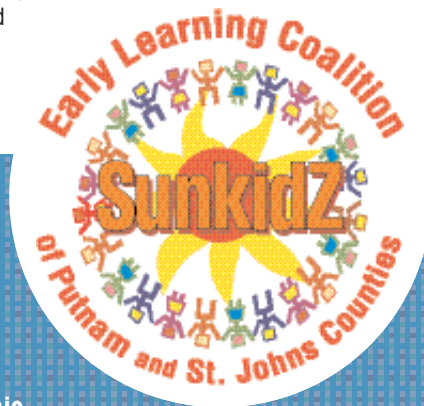
There are currently 65 Contracted School Readiness Providers in Putnam County; 28 Centers, 4 of which are Gold Seal; 37 Family Child Care Homes, 3 of which are Gold Seal. There are 7 providers in the process of accreditation, and none undergoing renewal, via accreditation scholarships provided by the Coalition.

In 2006-2007, there were 28 approved VPK providers serving 566 eligible children. 3 VPK providers are Gold Seal; 0 providers are Family Child Care Homes; and 2 are faith-based exempt.

St. Johns

There are currently 58 Contracted School Readiness Providers in St. Johns County; 38 Centers, 9 of which are Gold Seal; 26 Family Child Care Homes, 0 of which are Gold Seal. There are 11 providers in the process of accreditation.

In 2006-2007, there were 30 approved VPK providers serving 771 eligible children. 8 VPK providers are Gold Seal; 0 providers are family childcare homes; and 2 are faith-based exempt.



Bright Ideas:

A Professional Development Plan was approved, which included academic scholarships for providers working toward an Associate or Bachelor's degree and grants for providers seeking accreditation or re-accreditation, as well as various scholarships to conferences and workshops to increase professional development opportunities for our

My Animal Alphabet Workshop offered to all providers attending the workshop were eligible for reduced curriculum kits. In addition to the curriculum kits, providers were able to contact the facility at any time for class demonstrations.

Coalition participated in **Family Fun Day** sponsored by Family Child Care Home County.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2006-2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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