

# Circle of Friends

## Investing in the Future of Children

### Weathering a non-gala year— and honoring 'Champions for Children in Tough Times'

After a long debate, 4C decided that, in these tough economic times, hosting a black-tie, Saturday-night gala might not be the right thing to do. We worried that our sponsors over the past four Champions for Children galas might not be inclined to support such a festive event this coming January—when their own businesses, customers or communities are struggling.

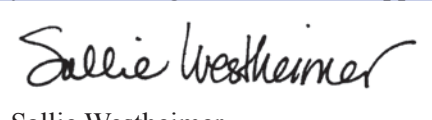
But it appears that many of those sponsors feel that—gala or not—the work of 4C to improve child care and early learning needs to continue unabated.

I sent a letter over the summer asking for support in this non-gala year to last year's gala sponsors, patrons and those who made significant gala gifts. We have received very generous donations from more than a third of

these supporters as this goes to press. Their notes say to keep up the good work—and they appreciate that their donations are going directly to support our services this year.

This is not the time—they believe and we believe—to halt the momentum that has been made in preparing children for kindergarten, or to stop assisting parents in finding the best possible care for their children. What better time to keep an eye to the future!

To the right is a list to date of those who responded to my letter asking for help weathering this non-gala year. I am so grateful for this support.



Sallie Westheimer  
Executive Director

*Honor Roll as of Sept. 22, 2009*

#### Champions for Children in Tough Times

Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
Medical Center  
Tom & Mary Ellen Cody  
Duke Energy Foundation  
Helen and John Habbert  
Susan L. Haas & Craig Decker  
The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. /  
US Bank Foundation  
David C. Herriman  
Karen & Dan Hurley  
Keating, Muething & Klekamp P.L.L.  
Macy's, Inc.  
Penny & Myles Pensak  
Sue Ransohoff  
James Riley  
Dianne & J. David Rosenberg  
John J. Schiff  
Mary Beth & Tom Sundermann  
Wells Fargo Insurance Services  
of Ohio LLC  
Western & Southern Financial Fund  
Sallie Westheimer & Greg Rhodes  
Ann & Peter Williams  
Nan & Daniel M. Witten

### 'Surviving Tough Times Forums' held in Cincinnati and Dayton

*Barnes Dennig sponsored events for 80 child care center directors*

Over the summer, 4C for Children was learning almost daily of the closing of another child care program. By early August, 4C estimated that at least 3,000 spaces in early education and care had been lost in recent months in the 23 counties that 4C serves in Southwest Ohio, the Miami Valley and Northern Kentucky. 4C decided an outreach effort was in order to offer assistance to struggling programs and to prevent additional closures.

In quick response 4C developed a plan to host lunch-time forums for directors and program administrators. Thanks to the sponsorship of Barnes Dennig, these forums were offered free at 4C locations in Cincinnati (Aug. 19) and Dayton (Aug. 20).

A variety of panelists helped center directors and program administrators assess if they are prepared to weather  
*See Survival Forums on page 2.*



Berta Velilla, director of early learning programs at Child Focus, Inc., in Clermont County, challenged directors to move beyond "last hired, first fired" when cutting staff in hard economic times. She encourages a policy based on program needs first, personal performance second and seniority only if all other things are equal.

# Strengthening Families public awareness campaign wraps up in 45211 ZIP code; Parent Cafés to begin in October

Parenting Can Be Overwhelming—that’s the message that has been running on 12 billboards and numerous bench ads in the 45211 ZIP code from July through early October. These are part of a two-year initiative to support parents and bring a new approach to preventing child abuse and neglect to Cincinnati’s Westwood and Cheviot neighborhoods by working with early childhood professionals in the targeted area. Nine child care centers and 15 family child care homes are participating in this project coordinated by 4C and funded by the Hamilton County Family and Children First Council through the Consortium for Resilient Young Children.

Michelle Miller-Myers, the 4C parent outreach specialist for this project, has been out in the community spreading the word about the next phase of Strengthening Families: Parent Cafés. The first series of three monthly cafés begins Oct. 21 with a second series to begin Jan. 20. These cafés are opportunities for parents in the target neighborhoods to come together to share experiences and wisdom; parent volunteers are being recruited and trained as discussion leaders. The goal of the Parent Cafés is to help parents strengthen their families by bouncing back from tough times, reaching out to other parents for support, learning more about child development and seeking help from community resources.

“I’m very excited to be working with this program,” says Michelle, “because I believe this nationally tested program can really help parents become more resilient and learn to take advantage of community resources when parenting seems overwhelming.”

“I’ve seen the desperation on parents’ faces,” she continues. “Many look tired—and I believe this initiative, with its Parent Cafés, can help parents of children of all



4C parent outreach specialist Michelle Miller-Myers (right) talks with a parent at the Strengthening Families booth at the September Harvest Home Festival on Cincinnati’s west side.

ages help themselves.” This project in Hamilton County is a pilot that may later spread to other areas in Ohio. The Strengthening Families model is already operating in 13 states across the nation.

Displays and materials to recruit participants for Parent Cafés have been rotating around the community—in libraries, public schools and the Kroger store on Glenway Avenue. A free community resource directory is also available for parents. It includes local numbers and contact information for organizations and programs that can help in times of crisis. In addition, a new Web site launched this summer—[www.ConnectCommunitySupport.org](http://www.ConnectCommunitySupport.org)—offers tips and resources for families.

On another track, participating child care providers are regularly working with Strengthening Families coaches to meet their goals, including building stronger connections with the parents of the children in their care. “Center directors have been handing out resources and discussing the protective factors that build strong families at their parent meetings,” Michelle reports.

Also underway are monthly meetings of the Learning Network Group that consists of participating child care providers and directors. A Parent and Community Advisory Group (including teachers, ministers, additional child care directors and other community members) also meets monthly.

For more information about this initiative or about Parent Cafés, contact Michelle Miller-Myers at 513-758-1311 or [mmyers@4cforchildren.org](mailto:mmyers@4cforchildren.org).

## Survival Forums

*continued from page 1*

the current economic challenges; understand how changes in the Ohio state budget may affect programs; and begin creating a survival strategy.

Venues in both Cincinnati and Dayton were filled to capacity with only a two-week window to advertise the events. “Judging from the questions and concerns expressed by participants, we think these forums met a real need in the early childhood community,” says Janet Keller, 4C director of professional development. Feedback from these forums will help 4C develop resources to help struggling programs in the future.

“4C wants to help ensure that early care and education programs survive,” says Sallie Westheimer, 4C executive director. “Our community’s families are counting on them!”



# Budget news for early childhood—mostly, but not all, bleak

Plus, Sallie Westheimer is blogging about the latest on early childhood issues!

Ohio state budget decisions are now final—after months of lobbying by early childhood advocates to protect Ohio’s children. “Cuts to early childhood education are significant although the news is not all bleak,” says Sallie Westheimer, 4C executive director.

“No really good choices were available due to the State’s financial crisis,” she reported to the community in the July 22 e-newsletter, *News From 4C*. But, she concluded, “it seems the legislature and the governor made the best decisions possible for Ohio’s young children, families and child care providers.” Here are a few of the changes:

## Local companies shower 4C with ‘kid-friendly’ art supplies

*Convergys, Ethicon Endo-Surgery and United Way!*

Three local organizations responded to 4C’s request for crayons, markers, colorful art paper and paint—all non-toxic and washable, or “kid-friendly”—as part of the 2009 United Way Campaign’s “Community Care Days.” Boxes of art supplies have been collected by employees at Convergys Corporation, Ethicon Endo-Surgery, Inc., and the in-house campaign committee at the United Way of Greater Cincinnati. 4C staff will distribute these supplies on visits to family child care homes and child care centers.

4C’s goal is to ensure that early care and education programs have the resources to encourage creativity and enhance the quality of learning for children in their care. Some supplies will also be used as prizes for 4C workshop participants and in family outreach efforts.



Annetta Rutland (left) and Janiece Dalmida of 4C’s Family Child Care Services welcome Ethicon Endo-Surgery representative, Shana Zink (right), as she presents 4C with boxes of donated art supplies as part of this year’s United Way Community Care Days.

- Ohio’s Early Learning Initiative, previously serving 14,000 at-risk children, was eliminated at the end of August. About 85% of the children, however, are eligible for other early childhood education services.
- Eligibility for child care financial assistance, now available to working families who earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level, has dropped to 150%. But all current families/children can retain assistance until their incomes exceed 200%.
- The assistance program’s payments for full-time care remain at 25 hours per week—and was not raised to 35 hours as feared. This is important for child care providers who would surely have been driven out of business without the ability to pay their fixed costs.
- There are new incentives for raising quality in child care programs that provide additional reimbursements for each subsidized child depending on a program’s quality rating: 5% more (one star), 10% more (2 stars), 15% more (3 stars) and new incentives for maintaining quality for centers who earn star ratings.
- College scholarships to help child care providers pay for continuing education will lose funding as part of the cuts to the early education budget.

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### ‘Blogsallie’

In August, Sallie began blogging in order to keep the community informed about important developments in the early childhood field both locally and nationally. Housed on the 4C Web site at [www.4cforchildren.org/blogsallie](http://www.4cforchildren.org/blogsallie), new posts will be announced on 4C for Children’s Facebook page and on Twitter. Keep in touch with “blogsallie” by becoming a fan of 4C for Children on Facebook, following 4CforChildren on Twitter or setting up an RSS feed through Sallie’s blog.

In one recent post (“Right-sizing? Or losing ground?”) Sallie worries about the impact of losing 3,000 spaces in child care programs in our region since January. In another post (“The fade-out myth”) she presents new research that debunks the view that the effects of quality preschool education “fades” by third grade.

Two additional 4C blogs will be launched in coming months—one for parents and one for early childhood professionals.

► **Developing Early Childhood Leaders project launches 'survival course'**

A new three-session course designed for program administrators began Sept. 22 at 4C's Cincinnati location, but the course has been approved so that Kentucky providers can also receive credit for participation. Titled "Beyond Survival: The Step-by-Step Guide to Being a Successful Administrator," this course is part of 4C's "Developing Early Childhood Leaders Project" funded by a major grant from a family foundation. Participants will have access to coaching sessions and receive a "survival toolkit" with additional resources such as forms and handouts, all included on a CD.

A year-long leadership seminar for emerging leaders in the early childhood field will begin in January.

► **Cincinnati Better Business Bureau renews 4C as an "Accredited Charity"**

4C has once again met the Cincinnati Better Business Bureau (BBB) Foundation's "20 Standards for Charity Accountability," giving 4C the title of "Accredited Charity" for another year. Organizations and businesses must be invited by the BBB to apply for this title and must meet standards within categories ranging from governance and oversight to finances and fundraising. Meeting the standards demonstrates that the agency is focused on goals and is implementing practices in an honest and professional manner. The official report about 4C can be viewed on the Better Business Bureau Web site.



► **4C joins Greater Cincinnati nonprofits as a beneficiary of the 2009 Rusty Ball**

4C for Children will participate as a 2009 beneficiary in The Rusty Ball, an event hosted by the Rusty Griswolds, a popular Cincinnati '80s cover band. The Nov. 21 event will be held at the Duke Energy Convention Center from 8 p.m. to midnight. Tickets go on sale Oct. 7 through the Rusty Ball Web site at \$50 for general admission, which includes four drink tickets, or \$75 VIP tickets are available that include an open-bar party from 7-8:30 p.m.

The goal of the organizing committee is to give 100 percent of ticket sales back to the charity designated upon purchase. 4C encourages all those committed to quality early education and care for the children in our community to designate 4C when buying Rusty Ball tickets. For more information, visit [www.rustyball.com](http://www.rustyball.com). Tickets can be purchased through this Web site beginning Oct. 7.

► **New literacy program about more than 'reading books'**

4C literacy specialists will soon complete the 10 visits scheduled for each of the 22 family child care providers participating in 4C's Language and Literacy Support Program. "Each visit has been eagerly anticipated," says Annetta Rutland, director of family child care services, and one of the program's home visitors.

"I was five minutes late once because of traffic, and all the children were waiting for me on the porch," she reports.

The goal of this year-long project, made possible by a grant from United Way Success By 6™, is to increase kindergarten readiness by increasing language and literacy activities in family child care settings. 4C specialists bring a different language and literacy kit on each one-hour visit.

"Activities during a visit might involve reading aloud, rhyming, singing or dramatic play," says Dawn Hoskins, one of the 4C literacy specialists. "Literacy development involves more than just reading a book."

Participants in this year-long program are family child care providers located in Cincinnati's Avondale and Price Hill neighborhoods also enrolled in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. 4C is working to secure private funding to expand this program next year, says Karen Hurley, director of development.

"We hope all the family child care providers continue to use these ideas and activities," says 4C's Annetta Rutland. "They can really make a difference for children."



Children cared for by family child care provider Edith Martin benefit from daily literacy activities, like dramatic play (above) encouraged by 4C literacy specialists.

## 4C in the news: TV, radio stories feature 4C 'experts'

Ensuring public awareness of the importance of early education—that is one of the eight strategies listed in 4C's current strategic plan. The number of media placements each quarter is the performance outcome identified to measure progress in this area. At the end of August, 50 placements had been logged for 2009 in comparison to a total of 50 for all of last year.

Included in these placements are a variety of stories in a variety of media—print, radio, TV and electronic. Radio and TV interviews with 4C “experts” this year have included:

- **Sallie Westheimer** was part of a **Q102** program taped in February about choosing quality care.
- 4C Parent Services Director **Karen Middendorf** joined a panel on **WVXU's Impact Cincinnati** in March to discuss what parents should know about summer camp programs.
- In May **WCPO** interviewed 4C COO **Elaine Ward** for a story on “Job Seekers Turning to Daycare as New Career Choice.” She emphasized that it takes more than love to be a successful early childhood professional.



Fox 19's Regina Russo (left) interviews 4C parent services director, Karen Middendorf, for a story about educational activities parents can do with children at home for the summer or the holidays. A link can be found on the 4C Web site in the What's New section.

- **WLW radio's** Jim Scott interviewed **Karen Middendorf** for his morning show in June on choosing quality summer child care and the resources 4C offers parents on the 4C Web site.
- Regina Russo featured **Karen Middendorf** in a **Fox 19 Making the Grade** segment in July about educational activity ideas for parents home with children for the summer. Regina, a mom herself, then contributed an article to the Fox Web site about her experience working with 4C and finding child care for her own children.
- In August Regina Russo visited a local child care center with **Karen Middendorf** for a **Fox 19 Mommy Memos** segment to discuss what parents should look for when choosing quality child care.
- Also in August, Dan Hurley interviewed **Carolyn Brinkmann** on **Local 12 Newsmakers** about the Strengthening Families initiative in the 45211 ZIP code. She heads up this project for 4C which is funded through the Hamilton County Family and Children First Council.

Links to all interviews can be found on the 4C Web site.

## 4C urges Dayton leaders to make early childhood a top priority

Ninety percent of a child's brain development takes place before entering school. “That is why quality early education and care is so important,” insisted Sallie Westheimer at a luncheon at the Dayton Racquet Club May 19. The goal of this “friend-raising” event was to acquaint Miami Valley civic leaders with 4C's work.

Jenni Roer, executive director of the Dayton-based Tait Foundation and one of five hostesses for the luncheon, praised the work of 4C since it became the state-designated child care resource and referral agency for the 10 counties of the Miami Valley in July 2006. “But there is still much work to be done,” Roer insisted.

Other luncheon hostesses were Susan Gruenberg, Marcia Shaw, Kelly Uhl and Joyce Young.

“How do we know if we are making progress in preparing children for kindergarten,” asked Montgomery County Commissioner Dan Foley.

Sallie Westheimer explained that the only tool for mea-

suring progress at this time is the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment–Literacy (KRA-L) that helps teachers identify early reading skills. The KRA-L is required of all children entering kindergarten in public schools.

And these metrics are not good for Montgomery County which, reported Roer, “has the lowest KRA-L scores of any urban county in the State of Ohio.” This means, she continued, “that 63 percent of the county's children require intervention upon entering kindergarten—as do 80 percent of the children entering Dayton Public Schools.”

Such statistics are one reason that the Tait Foundation has worked closely with the Montgomery County Family and Children First Council to establish *ReadySetSoar*. This initiative works to improve the quality of early care and education for all children in Montgomery County by providing incentives and assistance to early education programs to achieve state quality ratings.



...for Children

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4C for Children—leading resource in early education and care in Southwest Ohio, the Miami Valley and Northern Kentucky

## New 4C board members elected; annual report available

At the May 4, 2009, annual meeting, five new members were elected to the 4C Board of Trustees: Amelia Crutcher, community volunteer; Davida Gable, consultant, Finance for Decisions; Arlene Katz, community volunteer; Andrew Kwiatkowski, attorney, Dinsmore & Shohl; Chad Williams, Rippe & Kingston Co., PSC. The 4C annual report is available on the 4C Web site ([www.4cforchildren.org](http://www.4cforchildren.org)) or by calling 513-758-1201.

Sallie Westheimer  
Executive Director

Elaine Ward  
Chief Operating Officer

Karen Hurley  
Director of Development &  
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Amy Gorga  
Communications Coordinator

**Circle of Friends** is published twice annually to keep community stakeholders, financial supporters and volunteers connected to 4C's mission and inspired to keep investing in the future of children.

[www.4cforchildren.org](http://www.4cforchildren.org)

513-221-0033 Southwest Ohio  
859-781-3511 Northern Kentucky  
937-220-9660 Miami Valley



From left: Pam Page, board vice president; Sallie Westheimer, executive director; new members Arlene Katz, Amelia Crutcher and Davida Gable; Sue Maggard, trusteeship committee chair; Kim Chiodi, board president. Other new members not present for photo.

