

Wean Foundation donates more than \$92,000 to early care and education
Foundation steps up to improve quality of early childcare as area centers must meet new criteria

Warren, August 27, 2008— The Raymond John Wean Foundation in Warren, Ohio awarded grants to 13 area early childcare centers in the Mahoning Valley totaling \$92,377.

More than 30,000 children under the age of five reside in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties and of that, 60 percent live in homes where both parents work. Childcare is an important issue for the Valley and the Foundation has focused on that since 2003.

The centers are using these grants to fund systemic changes to meet the criteria of Step Up To Quality, a voluntary childcare quality rating system in Ohio.

Step Up To Quality is a three-star rating system developed by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services of educational standards for centers. These standards exceed the required state health and safety licensing standards for all childcare centers.

Of the 13 centers awarded grants, three are star-rated, two have applied for star rating and three are emerging stars. Childcare centers can also be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Three of the centers have such accreditation. St. Rose Child Care Center in Girard has the distinction of being the only center on the list to have both a star rating and NAEYC accreditation.

The YWCA of Youngstown is among the list of centers receiving grants from the Foundation to help improve the quality of care. YWCA Development Director Leah Brooks said, "As a nonprofit, finding funding is a challenge— so we can invest in quality, invest in our teachers and invest in the future." Brooks said the center works hard to be affordable to parents, but at the end of the day there isn't the funding to send teachers to education classes. The grant will help to aid in those in efforts.

The childcare centers awarded grants by the Foundation service 975 children from the area.

Candidates for the Ohio House of Representatives and Senate will hold an open forum at Youngstown State University Sept. 4 to discuss early care and education, sponsored by groundWork.

About the Raymond John Wean Foundation

The Wean Foundation was created by Warren industrialist Raymond John "Jack" Wean in 1949 with assets of more than \$80 million. Annually, the Foundation gives

approximately \$4 million to nonprofit organizations with a majority of those funds earmarked for nonprofits in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties.

The mission of the Raymond John Wean Foundation is to enhance the community's well-being and vitality through grant making, convening, advocating and providing leadership with a focus on economically disadvantaged people and neighborhoods. Please visit www.rjweanfdn.org to learn more about the Foundation.

Centers receiving grants:

Bear Hugs Child Care and Preschool, Struthers (NAEYC accreditation) \$12,000
Boardman United Methodist Preschool, Youngstown (NAEYC accreditation) \$12,000
Discover My World, Inc., Boardman \$1,000
Easter Seals of Mahoning, Trumbull and Columbiana Counties, Youngstown \$5,000
Heart Reach Ministries, Inc., Youngstown \$5,000
Hillyer Children's Center, Warren \$5,000
Jewish Community Center, Youngstown (Star rated) \$8,625
Millcreek Children's Center, Youngstown \$5,000
New Life Christian Preschool (Star rated) \$5,000
St. Paul's Child Care Center, New Middletown \$3,754
St. Rose Child Care Center, Girard (Star rated and NAEYC accreditation) \$15,000
YWCA of Youngstown, Youngstown (NAEYC accreditation) \$12,000
Zieglers Daycare, Orwell (Star rating) \$2,998

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