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## Dane County unveils birth to 4-years-old kindergarten program | News

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Dane County unveils birth to 4-years-old kindergarten program

Submitted by [Channel3000 Web Staff](#) ([profile/62130/channel3000-web-staff](#))  
Tuesday, September 25th, 2012, 5:38pm

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Dane County said it will partner with United Way of Dane County to launch a new pilot birth to 4-years-old kindergarten program to help more children and families succeed in Madison's Leopold Elementary School neighborhood.

This newly created Leopold Early Childhood Zone will be included in the county executive's 2013 budget, to be introduced on Oct. 1.

Dane County Executive Joe Parisi said the proposal expands the county's successful Early Childhood Initiative to help more families and partners it with the United Way's Parent-Child Home Program to comprehensively help children.

Dane County's Early Childhood Initiative offers birth-to-3 resources for families to ensure a healthy start for children in needy neighborhoods throughout Dane County, according to a Dane County news release. As of January of 2012, ECI has connected 358 mothers and fathers with employment.

This newly expanded effort will cover children from birth to 4-years-old kindergarten, and open a new ECI office in the Leopold Elementary School

neighborhood. Parisi said pairing the effort with the United Way's Parent-Child Home Program will provide a critical bridge for children about to enter school and their families.

"I think it might be the only one in the country. There are other zones, but there's no other early childhood zone, so I think this is a tremendous bringing together of the county's 0-2 program and our 2-4 program that's going to launch us right into the Madison Metropolitan School District's pre-K program," said Leslie Ann Howard, of United Way of Dane County.

The county said the Leopold Early Childhood Zone will provide hands-on resources for parents in their own neighborhood, to help them prepare their children for success in school with at-home education and an emphasis on enrollment in 4-year-old kindergarten at Leopold School.

Children will receive regular in-home visits from staff, and together, children and their parents will be taught valuable developmental skills, according to the news release.

Children and their parents can also attend regular program events that reinforce the work they do together at home. These sessions will help children prepare for and succeed in school, and help their parents continue a lifestyle of learning at home, county officials said.





The county's Joining Forces for Families program has been working in the Leopold neighborhood for more than five years, and will provide additional staff support and resources for the new pilot project.


The total cost of this new initiative is \$150,000. The county executive's 2013 budget will fund the county's share of \$60,000. The United Way will contribute \$60,000, with the project drawing an additional \$30,000 in federal dollars the county will secure. ♦


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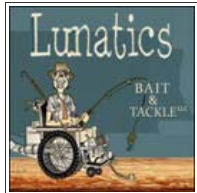
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