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NEW KIWANIS PROJECT WILL HELP CHILD CARE CENTRES BOOST CHILDREN'S MATH SKILLS

St. Catharines. The Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC) and the Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara are pleased to announce the launch of a new project designed to enhance children's numeracy skills. The project, which is funded by the Trillium Foundation, will provide 150 of Niagara's licensed child care programs with classroom resources related to math and numeracy skills instruction. Additionally, over 1000 Early Childhood Educators will be specially trained to use the resources. Some 6,000 children under the age of five will benefit.

The project comes in response to the growing need and importance in building children's foundational math skills in the early years. Niagara's 2006 Understanding the Early Years Study revealed that children in half of the municipalities in Niagara were comparatively "not on track" in terms of their interest in numeracy and memory games that support the development of early math skills. Other researchers have found that children who are exposed to math-rich environments prior to entering school (either at home or in a pre-kindergarten classroom) are less likely to struggle with math in the later grades. "Rising operational costs have made it difficult for some of the area's licensed child care programs to fully respond to the need for enhanced math programming, making an initiative such as this important in ensuring Niagara's youngest children have access to unique early learning materials," says Kathryn O'Hagan-Todd, Director of Children's Services with the Regional Municipality of Niagara. The Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara want to respond to the evidenced need for building children's foundational math skills in the early years by working with the ECCDC to provide materials and training to local early learning and child care staff to support them in providing optimal early math learning opportunities.

The Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara Young Children Priority First Committee initiated the numeracy project by conducting a smaller scale pilot in early 2008. In that instance, 43 Early Childhood Educators were trained and four licensed child care programs received numeracy resource kits for use in their classrooms. The Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara will use the Trillium Funding to expand on the success of the 2008 initiative. The Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara will work in conjunction with the ECCDC and with Louise Kool & Galt; one of Canada's leading suppliers of classroom equipment and learning resources. Louise Kool & Galt will provide a 25% discount on all items purchased for the Niagara numeracy project.



The Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara supporting local early learning and child care programs

The ECCDC is an independent charitable organization dedicated to providing Niagara's early learning and child care programs and providers with affordable access to the specialized learning resources, training and supports they need to deliver high quality care. Among the ECCDC's services are the operation of a lending library of classroom resources and learning equipment, a workroom for educators to research and develop new learning activities for the children in their care, and professional development programming for both centre- and home-based child care providers. These services are funded by the Regional Municipality of Niagara, Children's Services Department who also serve as the Systems Manager for Child Care in Niagara. The ECCDC's services are available to all of Niagara's Early Childhood Educators and teachers, as well as others involved in the care and education of young children.

For further information, please contact Lorrey Arial Bonilla at 905-646-7311, ext.321 or larial@eccdc.org.