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United Way of
Greater Lorain County

PRESS RELEASE

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United Way of Greater Lorain County Announces Oberlin Kids Community Collaborative

Lorain, OH – United Way of Greater Lorain County announced today that it has launched a new community collaborative that will include 14 partners providing free programs and services to ensure that all children in the Oberlin City School district will be prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Oberlin Kids is a collaborative of community and educational organizations designed to develop solutions to ensure all children enter school healthy and ready to learn. The collaborative looks to identify the needs of each pre-school aged child and its family and put them on a track to be prepared for kindergarten.

In addition to United Way of Greater Lorain County, Oberlin Kids partners include Child Care Resource Center, City of Oberlin, Kendal Early Learning Center, Lorain County Children and Family First Council, Lorain County Community Action Agency, Lorain County General Health District, Oberlin Business Partnership, Oberlin City Schools, Oberlin College Bonner Center for Service and Learning, Oberlin Community Services, Oberlin Early Childhood Center, Oberlin Public Library and OhioGuidestone.

“Oberlin Kids presents an important change in the educational system because it fills the gaps by bringing the public, private and non-profit sectors together to coordinate the work that is being done with children before they enter kindergarten,” said United Way of Greater Lorain County executive director Bill Harper. “We’ve learned that starting at kindergarten is too late. Many of these children already need referrals for service or intervention by that time and have trouble getting back on track with their peers. Through this collaborative, we can reach out to the community to find the children and families who could benefit from some additional assistance to ensure that all children have the same chance at success.”

Oberlin Kids is designed to support the parents and families by providing the resources necessary to encourage their child’s development. Initiatives will include launching a universal learning checkup, resource, and referral program (On Track for Kindergarten), increasing accessibility and participation in health and wellness programs for children and families, increasing participation and access to kindergarten transition programming and building capacity within community organizations to better serve children and families.

“When members of a community work in silos to affect change, they change only a small segment of the system needed to ensure lasting outcomes. Oberlin Kids seeks to build bridges between community silos

to enrich the entire community and provide lasting and embedded change,” said Janet Haar, Oberlin Business Partnership director. “Kindergarteners of today are tomorrow’s future – both educationally and economically – and we are working to craft our future by initiating collaboration at the beginning of the learning cycle.”

According to the Oberlin Kids collaborative partners, being ready to learn includes four key areas – having basic needs met, being developmentally ready, having adequate support in place for the child and family, and participating as a family in transition to kindergarten activities.

Families who reside in Oberlin will be able to sign-up with Oberlin Kids to obtain free resources on child development across the four key areas, including access to family events and play groups, health and nutrition resources and services, learning check-ups for their child, referral support, books and more.

The first opportunity for the community to get involved with Oberlin Kids will be at the Oberlin Juneteenth festival on Saturday, June 14 on Tappan Square from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Oberlin Kids representatives will be available to meet with families, answer any questions and showcase all that Oberlin Kids has to offer.

More information on the Oberlin Kids Collaborative and United Way of Greater Lorain County can be found at www.oberlinkids.org and www.uwloraincounty.org or by calling 440-277-6530.

Quotes from Oberlin Kids collaborative partners:

City of Oberlin

"We realize that in order to accomplish our goal, we need to have multiple partners working together to strengthen our community." Eric Norenberg, Oberlin City Manager

Child Care Resource Center

"Lorain County leaders are realizing that improving our communities takes more than just a one shot program or project. Those projects won't make real community impact unless all community-based supports improve at the same time and with guided focus. No single organization, however innovative or powerful, could accomplish this alone. I go back to a great African Proverb which says, 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' We in Lorain County want to go far." Jenny Dodge, Child Care Resource Center executive director.

Kendal Early Learning Center

"The Oberlin Kids collaborative is unique in that it brings many professionals from a vast variety of professions to ensure the kids and families in Oberlin have their needs met in the community to ensure they succeed in school and in life. Together we can accomplish more, which makes the impact of this collaborative all the more impactful in the community. This approach will help children and families of Oberlin to ensure that not only the children's needs are being met but also the families." Jeni Hoover, Kendal Early Learning Center director.

Oberlin City Schools

"A community coming to together to help our youngest children, that's what Oberlin Kids is all about. Organizations working together with the common goal of making sure every Oberlin preschool child is ready for Kindergarten, and therefore ready to begin their formal educational journey." John Schroth, Oberlin City Schools Superintendent.

Oberlin College Bonner Center for Service Learning

"The collective impact model identifies creative resources and uses them to make thorough, long-lasting change. The Collaborative asked: who needs to be in the room to address kindergarten readiness? Not just one group, but dozens – from parents and family to teachers, health providers and religious leaders. By bringing all their skills and resources to the same problem-solving table, we can reach children holistically, addressing all the interacting needs that help each child grow." Helen Kramer, Bonner Leader, Oberlin College.

Oberlin Early Childhood Center

"The collective impact model calls for a paradigm shift in the way we think about how we create systems change. We need vested partners from all systems in order to ensure the work we do creates long-lasting impact." Jennifer Harris, Ph.D., Oberlin Early Childhood Center executive director.

OhioGuidestone

"Using the collective impact model to promote early childhood development and kindergarten readiness brings to life the age-old wisdom of 'it takes a village to raise a child.' We are grateful for the opportunity to impact the lives of kids and families in the city of Oberlin." Becky Bernstein, OhioGuidestone program supervisor.

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United Way of Greater Lorain County's mission is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community through leadership, collaboration and resource development. United Way of Greater Lorain County focuses on strategic, results-oriented and life-changing impact by encouraging and supporting community collaboratives that address the four areas of greatest need and potential in our community - Education, Income, Health and Basic Needs. Everyone has a voice and can contribute. Give. Advocate. Volunteer. LIVE UNITED. Learn more at www.uwloraincounty.org or by calling 440-277-6530.