



Dear Friends,

First of all, thank you for your interest and ongoing support of the Copper Country Great Start Collaborative! As you know, we are a group made up of parents, clergy, business people and health and human service organization leaders. Our mission is to ensure that all children arrive at the kindergarten door ready, willing and able to succeed.

Fiscal year 2009 was a tough, busy one, to be sure. The state budget tested all, but most especially young children and their families. That said, out of trial comes strength, and the good news was that we discovered that by working together passionately we can improve the lives of young learners and their families, and therefore improve Michigan's economic and social future.

The listing below is by no means comprehensive, but it does provide the highlights of the year and demonstrates the hard work and commitment of the GSC and Parent Coalition members.

I wish you all the best as we head into another challenging – and hopefully rewarding – fiscal year.

Cathy Benda, Chair

Success Stories

Over 30 members representing parents, business, health and human service organizations, and education worked together to establish the Great Start Collaborative to address critical issues for Copper Country children and their families.

A Report to the Community was published in January 2009. The report focused on the status of young children in the areas of pediatric health, social emotional development, early care and education, family support and parent leadership.

Focus groups, a web based survey, and community conversations were held with over 25 different groups to get feedback and input on the report.

Information from the community report and focus groups, an infrastructure review, and examination of existing programs and services culminated in a day-long strategic planning retreat on June 11, 2009, with 22 members in attendance.

The Strategic Plan and Action Agenda Goals were completed in October of 2009 and are the focus for our work in this coming year.

GSC Activities

The GSC and Parent Coalition participated in the Kiwanis Family Fair at the Copper Country Mall in March to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood development, the Great Start Collaborative and the Parent Coalition.

Parents attended Parent Coalition meetings and held events during the county fairs, Bridgefest, and the downtown Houghton Halloween Party, which focused on the importance of early childhood development and getting involved.

On October 3, 2008, the Copper Country GSC co-sponsored a candidate forum. The forum highlighted candidates' positions on issues of importance to young children and their families.

On May 21st, 2009, over 150 young children and their parents, along with Parent Coalition members and Great Start Collaborative members, participated in the first annual local Star Power Rally and Bridge Walk highlighting the importance of early childhood services in our community.



Copper Country parents "Walk the Bridge" celebrating Star Power.



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