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WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

April 11-17 2010

An Action Plan for Interested Early Childhood Advocates

Background

After hearing interest from advocates in organizing a second virtual strike, the Kids Are Priority One Coalition sponsored a conference call in December 2009 to discuss that possibility. Participants* representing Building Bright Futures (BBF) statewide, seven BBF regions and the Kids Are Priority One staff developed the plan described below.

*Participants: Rachel Glickman (BBF), Dawn Powers (CIS Intake Coordinator for Caledonia/ Southern Essex), Anne Maule (Lamoille BBF), Amy Conant (Chittenden BBF), Cynthia Greene (Chittenden BBF), Susan Lloyd (Hartford BBF), Sonja Raymond (Lamoille BBF), Robin Stromgren (Bennington BBF), Ellie Gilman (Franklin/Grand Isle), Kim Friedman (Kids Are Priority One staff), Kelly Ault (Kids Are Priority One staff).

Goal

Our goal is to organize a series of actions and events during the national Week of the Young Children (WOYC) from April 11-17, 2010. WOYC is sponsored nationally by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). WOYC actions and events in Vermont will be aimed at raising awareness among community leaders, including elected officials and employers, regarding the link between child care and Vermont's economic development/recovery.

Participation

We encourage all interested individuals (e.g. parents, professionals, and children), organizations and Building Bright Futures Regional Councils to participate. Participation is strictly voluntary.

Theme

Although NAEYC has suggested a theme for the Week of the Young Child, we in Vermont have decided to build on Building Bright Futures' tag line: "Vermont's future starts with today's children."

Name

We may want to simply refer to the “Week of the Young Child” as the name of the week-long series of actions/events. This decision will be made by a statewide Organizing Committee, which will be formed on January 21st as part of a BBF-sponsored conference call. There is general agreement, however, that we should avoid calling this action a “virtual strike,” given United Professions’ drive currently underway in Vermont to form a union of early childhood educators.

Decision-Making

The Kids Are Priority One Coalition will convene and staff a statewide WOYC Organizing Committee, which ideally will have one representative from each participating region. This committee will help ensure statewide coordination of activities, make decisions regarding general outreach strategies, assist with fundraising and determine a name for the week-long series of events/activities (if it is not called Week of the Young Child).

The Kids Are Priority One staff and Organizing Committee will generate ideas and provide resources. However, each participating Council/organization/program will determine the nature and scope of the activities that it undertakes.

Activities

Participating organizations and BBF Councils may undertake any activity of their choosing. Here are several suggestions, some of which are dependent on available funding:

- Wear buttons (the same as those worn during the 2008 virtual strike);
- Host a local event for community leaders, such as a breakfast or mixer, possibly sponsored by a local business group (this event could be tied to a tour—see below);
- Organize a children’s art show;
- Plan a parent-designed and organized activity;
- Create a visual display of local employers supported by area child care programs;
- Hold an event sponsored by a local member of Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility;
- Invite legislators to a regional early childhood educators’ training event/conference (if it is scheduled to take place during this week);
- Do media outreach around the events/activities you hold. For example:
 - Send out a press advisory/release describing local Week of the Young Child events;
 - Submit an Op-Ed written by a local expert;
 - Organize a series of letters to the editor;
 - Participate in a local radio talk show.

Communities may want to consider holding their WOYC event(s) during a well-attended, established community event or a public venue to increase visibility and participation.

Eligible early childhood programs will also be invited to host a tour. Invitations will be based on a number of criteria established by the Kids Are Priority One lead organizations and the Permanent Fund for the Well-Being of Young Children (the tours' primary funder). Legislators, employers and other community leaders will be invited to attend the tour.

Coalition Staff Support

The Kids Are Priority One Coalition staff can provide:

- Assistance with fundraising efforts;
- Coordination and distribution of buttons and posters (available as funding permits);
- Centralized publicity (including templates for press releases);
- Talking points for use during events;
- Steps for collecting information on local employers supported by local child care programs;
- Assistance planning and implementing a tour;
- Coordination of a statewide WOYC Organizing Committee (which would function similarly to the Virtual Strike Organizing Committee);
- Use of the Coalition's e-network to help spread the word about activities being planned.

Kim Friedman will coordinate WOYC activities, provide support to the regions as needed and staff the statewide Organizing Committee (which will function similarly to the Virtual Strike Organizing Committee in 2008.) Melissa Riegel-Garrett will organize the tours and provide media support. Kelly Ault will focus her WOYC efforts on business outreach and parent involvement.

Time Commitment

Ideally, every region that wants to participate in the WOYC will have a representative on the statewide Organizing Committee. This will entail participation in approximately 5 conference calls, email communication between calls, and collaboration with local organizers.

The time involved for local organizers will depend on the scope of activities your Council/organization/program decides to undertake. Those decisions will be made on a community-by-community basis.

Budget

Kids Are Priority One Coalition staff are in the process of identifying possible funding sources for WOYC. Coalition staff will assist the Organizing Committee with fundraising for educational

materials, such as buttons and poster, for statewide use. Participating regions are encouraged to find funding sources for local events and/or contribute to a statewide Materials Fund. Coalition staff will be available to assist local organizers with local fundraising efforts.

Next Steps

Planning for Week of the Young Child (WOYC) events is already underway:

- Part of the standing monthly BBF conference call for January (1/21/10) will be devoted to further fleshing out this plan and identifying a Statewide Organizing Committee. If you belong to a BBF Council, please share this proposal with your Council prior to that call so we can use the call to identify those Councils that want to participate. If you do not normally participate in this call, contact Rachel Glickman, Building Bright Futures' Interim Director of Development and Administration for the call-in number (rglickman@buildingbrightfutures.org or 802-579-7217).
- The Kids Are Priority One staff will organize a conference call for the Organizing Committee for early February.
- With the help of a small planning committee, Tours Coordinator Melissa Riegel-Garrett has begun to identify communities in which tours of early care and education programs will be held.

For more information about this plan or to join the WOYC Organizing Committee, contact Kim Friedman at (802) 348-9879 or kfriedman@svcable.net.