

Symposium Highlights Efforts and Impact of Early Learning

The McKean County Early Learning Outreach Committee hosted a free Early Childhood Symposium — “Celebration of Our Successes: Five Years of Collaboration” on Tues., March 7, 2017 at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford.

Sponsored by The Blaisdell Foundation, the symposium was a celebration of the achievements of the county’s early learning programs over the last five years. It also gave renewed focus to the challenges and investments which still need to be made to ensure continued capacity-building, quality, collaboration and family engagement in the county’s early childhood programs.



Keynote speaker Dr. Dana Winters, research associate from the Fred Rogers Center in Latrobe, discussed “Growing and Learning through Relationships.” In her role at the Center, Winters supports internal and external research and evaluation efforts, while managing various projects focused on the power of human interactions. Her research focuses on the role of families, communities, and adult-child interaction in education and childcare settings. Her projects include working with early childhood educators, local school districts, community groups, and social service programs. In addition to her work with the Center, Winters coordinates the Fred Rogers Scholars Program for Saint Vincent College students.

“The committee was pleased to have Dr. Winters as the keynote speaker,” said Bob Esch, vice president of external affairs at American Refining Group, chairman of the McKean County Collaborative Board and Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC) member, who delivered the opening remarks for the evening. “The Center’s mission and core values are closely aligned to the mission of McKean County’s early learning community. The Center’s belief that ‘The foundation of every child’s healthy development is the power of human connection’ resonates throughout our local programs and initiatives.”

Jodie Holmberg, early learning consultant from the IU-9 and McKean County parent, presented, “What a Difference Five Years Can Make,” recognizing the accomplishments of public, private and faith-based early childhood programs and expressing appreciation to all the providers, supporters, donors and partners who make early learning so vibrant in the county.

Other statewide partners discussed their organizations’ distinct roles, include Carey Harris, executive director of the ELIC; Steve Doster, state director of Pennsylvania, Mission: Readiness and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids; Stephanie Mock, director of public policy and outreach for PennAEYC; and Kevin Thomas, executive director of Kiwanis International Pennsylvania District.

Free handouts and resources were also provided for those in attendance.

For more information about the early learning efforts in McKean County, please contact Jan Vicini at 814-887-5512 x302 or jvicini@iu9.org.