



**Southwest Solutions**

Answers for a healthy community

**CONTACTS:**

Steve Palackdharry  
*Communications Manager*  
Southwest Solutions  
313.297.1374

Donna Cielma  
*Director of Family Literacy*  
Southwest Counseling Solutions  
313.896.2800 x. 117

**—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—  
EARLY LEARNING CENTER OPENS  
AT MUNGER ELEMENTARY**

**Will help parents and caregivers prepare children for school**

*DETROIT, April 28, 2009* — Families with preschool children are celebrating a new center in southwest Detroit that will provide free training and resources to parents and caregivers so that they can prepare children to be “ready to learn” when the children enter school.

More than 100 people attended the opening of the Early Learning Community (ELC) site at Munger Elementary on April 23. The ELC center is run by Southwest Counseling Solutions, whose highly regarded family literacy program is known for its effective partnerships with public schools in southwest Detroit.

The center will promote child development and early literacy; mentor and support parents, family members, friends and neighbors who care for young children; give lessons in health, safety and nutrition; include a lending library that will offer educational materials that can be taken home; and provide incentives and free childcare for those attending the training sessions. The sessions will be conducted in both English and Spanish.

“We encourage parents and caregivers to take full advantage of the ELC center in their neighborhood,” said Donna Cielma, director of Family Literacy at Southwest Counseling Solutions. “Most of the development in a child occurs before the child starts school, and it is critical that a child experience opportunities to develop strong cognitive and language skills.”

The ELC at Munger is a result of a collaboration among the United Way of Southeastern Michigan, the NCCA, the 2009 NCAA Men’s Final Four, the Detroit Local Organizing Committee, Southwest Counseling Solutions, and Detroit Public Schools. The NCAA contributed \$250,000 to support the establishment of ELC sites in four different Detroit neighborhoods. The grant is the first to be made from the NCCA’s Legacy Program affiliated with the Final Four. The program seeks to make a lasting, positive difference in cities that host the championship round of the collegiate basketball tournament. Detroit hosted the Final Four this year.

“Not only will these NCAA community hubs strengthen neighborhood support services for early education, they will get children excited about reading and better prepare them for success in

school,” said Rod Gillum, vice president of corporate responsibility and diversity for General Motors and Legacy Program committee chair.

The Munger ELC center expects to serve about 130 parents and caregivers. As a result, an estimated 525 children will be better prepared to be successful in school. Parents and caregivers attending the opening event eagerly signed up for the training sessions.

Veronica Valencia, a mother of two children, said she was happy to visit the center and believes it will enable her to improve her children’s reading and learning skills. “This center is much needed,” Veronica said. “I want the best for my children and the center will help me give my best.”

To learn more about the ELC center at Munger, contact Lynn McGregor at 313.515.8570 or [lmcgregor@swsol.org](mailto:lmcgregor@swsol.org).

---

Southwest Solutions (<http://www.swsol.org>) is the holding company of Southwest Counseling Solutions and Southwest Housing Solutions. The family of corporations offers a wide range of services to create a stronger and healthier southwest Detroit community, including mental health and early childhood services, affordable housing, home ownership counseling, employment opportunities and innovative economic development projects.

# # #