



bright
futures
begin
at birth

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Bright Futures event energizes community

93% of participants want to be involved in future efforts on early childhood brain development.

On November 1, 2016, HealthPartners and Greater Twin Cities United Way brought together more than 500 people from over 200 organizations representing the health care, business, social service, government and education sectors. The goal of Bright Futures Begin at Birth was to spark a collective, statewide effort to ensure that every child in Minnesota has a healthy start and bright future. The event both informed and energized attendees around the power of reading, talking and singing to young children and the difference it can make in a child's life. In fact, 96 percent of attendees identified at least one thing they could do to support early childhood development as an individual or with their organization.

Over the course of the morning, keynote speaker George Halvorson, chair of First 5 California Children and Families Commission, shared compelling statistics, stories and research on brain development in the first few years of life. Angela Davis, WCCO-TV anchor, expertly fostered a rich dialogue with four panelists from the community - Andre Dukes, Northside Achievement Zone; Jane Eastwood, Saint Paul Public Library; Barb Fabre, White Earth Child Care; and Luz María Frías, Minneapolis Foundation. The table conversations that followed began to uncover tangible ways we can work together to achieve our goal.

To close, the leaders of HealthPartners and Greater Twin Cities United Way, Mary Brainerd and Sarah Caruso, respectively, shared a few words of inspiration and encouraged us to move forward together. The overarching takeaway of the event was that we can do more together than we can do alone by building on the great work that is already underway in Minnesota. Thank you! Stay tuned for more information about this work and how you can stay involved.



The event was a top trending topic in the Twin Cities on Twitter! Keep the conversation going using **#brightfuturesmn** on social media.

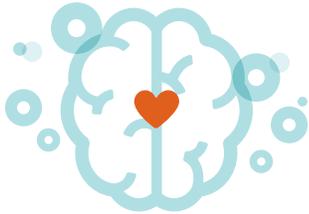
Reading and talking to young children changes lives



“Those early years are stunningly important because those are the years when the neurons connect in each child’s brain. Those are the years that when the brain is exercised, the neurons connect, and the connections last for life.”

“If we get this information to every parent, we can change lives. Everyone in this room should know that and understand that and figure out how to use this information in ways that will help children.”

GEORGE HALVORSON



700 neural synapses are created every second in newborns.



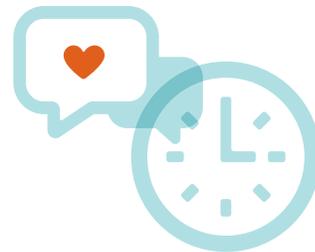
What children know by the age of 3 can predict their future success in school.



0-90 days is a critical time in a child’s life; the carry over to the future is impactful.



Reading every day can change lives for children. Try starting with 30 minutes.



Talking to a child every day can reduce stress and strengthen relationships.



Panel inspires with personal stories and real-world examples

Moderator Angela Davis kicked-off the panel discussion with a personal story of reading with her grandmother. That set the stage for an open and honest conversation about the challenges our community faces and how we can best support families to ensure our children get off to the best start possible.

ANDRE DUKES:

All change starts with building an authentic and trusting relationship with the parents. We need to empower parents to develop strategies that work for them based upon their reality and celebrate the positive changes, especially the small first steps.

BARB FABRE:

If we really want to be impactful, we have to think outside the box. We have to be intentional. We need to provide as many literacy resources to parents and caregivers as we can, where ever we can, whenever we can if we want to make a difference in increasing literacy and vocabulary in children.

JANE EASTWOOD:

Libraries see their role in early learning as a two-generation approach: share books with children and model for parents how to read and interact with their children in ways that encourage conversation and language development, as well as promote good habits around literacy and language in general.

LUZ MARÍA FRÍAS:

Our young children are exposed to trauma on a daily basis. We cannot ignore the impact this exposure has on our children's developmental trajectory. Low-income families have more exposure to trauma. In fact, Gandhi once said that poverty is the worst form of violence.



Table discussions generate ideas and spark conversation

- ♥ Use Little Libraries to share children's books and put them in laundromats and grocery stores.
- ♥ Add "Read. Talk. Sing." messages to new parent groups.
- ♥ Start prenatally. Talk with parents about talking to their baby in the womb and starting at birth. Integrate Read. Talk. Sing. into prenatal classes and lactation training.
- ♥ Engage fathers in the read-talk-sing message.
- ♥ Create an app to upload before leaving hospital with education tips on Read. Talk. Sing.
- ♥ Encourage storytelling and other spoken word to engage parents of all backgrounds and cultures. This is an effective way for anyone to interact with a child, anywhere.
- ♥ Give every new mom a library card before she leaves the hospital.

Working together to ensure bright futures for all children



“Why does a health care organization care about this in the first place? The things that really determine health, especially for children, don’t always happen in clinics or hospitals. We’re an important part. But what’s really important is what happens in families, communities and schools.”

“I hope that you will not only personally want to stay engaged, but that you will reach out and volunteer to be part of what can we do to make Minnesota the best place for little ones to thrive in the first 90 days of life. Wouldn’t that be a powerful thing to accomplish together?”

MARY BRAINERD



“We are making a substantive difference in a child’s and a family’s life, every day, every minute, with our collective work.”

“What is really profound is the opportunity for the medical community and the social science experts, the teachers, and the community workers in this room to come together on something. This isn’t about money. It’s about grassroots and systems behavior change, which is a different and groundbreaking opportunity for us to work together.”

SARAH CARUSO

Diverse perspectives, rich content inform and motivate

“This was an energizing experience. Thanks for the opportunity to learn more about childhood brain development. The entire morning was beneficial and well worth the time!”

“I appreciate the diverse perspectives represented on the panel and that the panelists represented greater MN and not just metro. It reminds us that these issues around early development are universal. George Halvorson offered a fact-packed talk and I learned much more than I expected. Thanks for doing this session!”

“Thank you for initiating and hosting this event. Equally important as the knowledge that is shared is the strength that develops from growing a community with common understandings of what is essential for children’s well-being.”