

# Grant helps Scott group advance early childhood education

By Jerry Boggs  
Georgetown News-Graphic

Scott Turner wants every parent, daycare worker and caregiver to know that a child's education does not begin on the first day of kindergarten.

It starts way earlier than that.

"I think it is nearly impossible to overestimate the importance of the first three years of life in determining the likelihood children will enter school ready to learn and succeed," he said.

Turner is coordinator of the Scott County Community Early Childhood Council, which works to promote an array of services and opportunities designed to give young children the best start possible on their educational path. The group offers support to area preschools, daycare centers and certified home childcare providers with the goal of making all kids school-ready before they enroll in kindergarten.

"The more we can stress the importance to all providers of early care and education — that they are not just caretakers of

Recently, Gov. Steve Beshear announced a \$56,620 grant for Scott, Harrison, Nicholas and Bourbon counties for the CECC. The grant is through Kentucky's tobacco settlement funds.

"Too many children enter school with preventable health problems, undeveloped minds and no sense of curiosity or engagement in life around them. They start out already behind," said Beshear in a press release. "These grants will help communities put our youngest students on the path to a life of promise and meaning."

The money will help expand the projects into the surrounding counties to create a stronger network, Turner said.

"Three other counties requested this year that Scott County partner with them in the request for funding," he said. "This is our first year working beyond Scott County. We will all benefit."

Among the projects the grant money will serve are:

- Promoting the Stars for Kids Now program, which encourages childcare centers to go above and beyond minimum

Community Early Childhood Councils	Amount Awarded
Todd	\$10,120.00
Montgomery	\$17,580.00
Trigg	\$7,890.00
Calloway	\$18,900.00
Kenton-Campbell	\$60,000.00
Hardin	\$25,000.00
Floyd	\$25,000.00
Madison	\$25,000.00
Union	\$9,330.00
Scott/Harrison/Nicholas/Bourbon	\$56,620.00
Tri County (Laurel, Whitley, Knox)	\$68,920.00
Allen, Logan, Simpson	\$42,040.00
Jefferson	\$50,000.00
Barren	\$25,000.00
Boone	\$25,000.00
Henderson	\$25,000.00
Daviess	\$25,000.00
Larue	\$8,000.00
Hart, Metcalfe, Monroe	\$27,670.00
Bell and Harlan	\$35,800.00
Webster	\$8,660.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$596,530.00</b>

materials which might be cost prohibitive for individual centers to acquire. The CECC provides the material to be checked out for use throughout the county.

• Educating parents and caregivers on the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, which are a collection of developmental benchmarks, showing what children of a certain age should be doing. The program helps lead to the earlier diagnosis of develop-

The more time passes before a diagnosis, the harder the issue can be to correct.

"Over time, the further away from the center you get, the harder it is to fix," Turner said. "About 80 percent of brain development happens by age 3. We know the earlier you intervene in a potential developmental problem, the easier it is to fix."

"The longer you wait, the harder it is."

Turner said Kentucky

mental delays," he said. "Any 3 or 4 year old can be screened free of charge at the preschool center."

Also, all kids entering kindergarten will be screened, and the CECC will provide training for preschool educators and other caregivers on the standards the state has approved, in order to facilitate earlier diagnosis.

"We think that will enable centers to identify potential delays in the same way those delays would be identified in a kindergartner," he said.

Turner said studies have shown that second grade reading level is a good predictor of future school success and students who are not reading on grade level by the 5th grade are almost certain to have academic difficulties in middle school.

The indicators show that educating children at a very young age creates a base that they build upon throughout their entire lives, he said.

"Kentucky has been very good at recognizing that and putting supports in place,"

Turner said. "But we