
The Program

Young Children: Priority One was launched in October of 1990. Since that time, more than 5,000 Kiwanis clubs around the world have developed projects to help young children, investing an estimated \$80 million and 7.5 million hours.

The Kiwanis International Board has made an ongoing commitment to

Young Children: Priority One, and it urges all clubs to support this program. By working together on the needs of young children, Kiwanis clubs can have a powerful effect.

This does not mean that clubs are asked to implement the same project. Rather, each club is urged to identify the greatest needs of young children in its community and develop projects that meet those needs.

Young Children projects have ranged from building a playground for a child care center to distribution of a safety brochure in 10 languages throughout Europe.

Popular projects at the club level have included reading and distribution of books to preschoolers, making and distribution of hospital trauma dolls, and community education about Shaken Baby Syndrome and lead poisoning.



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Young Children Priority One

Fact Brochure



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN,
PRENATAL THROUGH AGE FIVE

SERVING THE CHILDREN
OF THE WORLD



The Problems

Our children are in serious trouble.

FACT: Each year thousands of babies are born so small that they have a very poor chance for survival, and those who survive often have a mental or physical handicap.

FACT: As many as one-third of the children eligible to enter Kindergarten are not ready to do so.

FACT: If we do not change present trends, more than 100 million children will die over the next ten years.

Early childhood experts have always pointed to how much children learned in the first three years and pointing to studies that showed children under six who lived in a nurturing, educational environment were more successful in school and in life.

A child's brain builds connections in response to the stimuli it encounters. Thus, an environment rich in opportunities to touch, taste, see, hear, and experiment help infants and toddlers construct brains that learn more readily. And a loving, nurturing caregiver helps build brain connections and biochemical responses that will help a child control his emotions and feel safe for the rest of his life.

Every day the needs of our children grow stronger. Kiwanis clubs can work with them to help set them on a path to learn more, be happier, succeed, and love.

The Kiwanis Response

Kiwanis International has developed a continuing program titled Young Children: Priority One. Every club is asked to participate in this program by developing two projects that address needs of children prenatal through age five. One should address a local need in one of the areas described below and the other should support an international need like the Worldwide Service Project.

Maternal and Child Health—A child does more growing and more learning between conception and age five than at any other period of life. The health care and nutrition of the mother-to-be and the young child can directly affect the child's entire future—from survival in the first year to learning abilities throughout life. *Possible projects include public education, development of health care services for a community, home visitation to pregnant women, and adolescent pregnancy prevention.*

Child Care and Development—From language development to establishing their autonomy, young children continually blossom with new abilities—if they are in a stimulating, nurturing environment. This is why children need early experiences that foster development of their abilities. Unfortunately, there are many areas where adequate child care facilities and trained personnel are in very short supply. *Possible projects include establishing a resource and referral agency, support for an early childhood development program, family literacy and public awareness.*

Parent Education and Support—Every parent needs help to face the tremendous challenge of raising a child. Combined with other stresses, it may even overwhelm a person. That is why parents need education, personal support, and sometimes an escape valve. *Possible projects include support of parenting classes, a helpline, child abuse prevention classes, family resource library or center, home visitation program, or respite care.*

Safety and Pediatric Trauma—In many developed nations, accidents are the number one killer of children, and many of these accidents could be prevented. When a serious injury does occur, a child deserves the very best care possible. That requires special equipment and training in what doctors call pediatric trauma, for children respond differently to severe injuries than adults do. *Possible projects include a safety seat loan program, smoke alarm battery checks, distribution of choke-test tubes, drown proofing, education on poisons, and the Kiwanis hospital doll.*

Collaboration

Many of the needs Kiwanis clubs will discover in their communities may prove too large for a single club to address effectively. Kiwanis clubs should seek out partners to help them evaluate the needs of young children in their communities and develop effective projects.
