



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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For Immediate Release

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**Early Learning and Child Care Programs Honored at
Starry, Starry Night Event**

National expert lauds BrightStars, Rhode Island's newly implemented Quality Rating and Improvement System, for being among the best in the country.

BrightStars recognizes program quality and gives parents information to make choices about their children's care and early education.

PROVIDENCE, RI, December 9, 2009 – More than 100 community leaders gathered for Starry, Starry Night, an event celebrating and saluting the first group of child care centers, preschool programs and family child care programs that have joined BrightStars. The celebration was held on **Wednesday, December 9, 2009 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Providence Marriott**, located on the corner of Charles and Orms Streets. The Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT sponsored the event.

Launched in 2009, BrightStars is Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs. Tammy Camillo, Director of the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children and BrightStars, stated, "We applaud the programs honored here tonight. Each one has voluntarily stepped up to be rated by BrightStars, demonstrating their commitment to quality and to creating a nurturing learning environment for children." As of November 2009, there were 14 programs (10 child care centers/preschool programs and 4 family child care homes) participating in BrightStars, which includes a quality assessment and rating, a customized improvement plan, and support to access quality improvement resources. More than 600 children were enrolled in the participating programs. Another 11 programs are in the process of getting a quality assessment and rating.

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Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, said, “BrightStars is a critical part of Rhode Island’s early learning system. Research on early care and education shows the importance of program quality to children’s skills and overall healthy development. Children who participate in high-quality early care and education programs score higher on tests of language and cognitive skills and demonstrate stronger social and emotional development than children who receive poor-quality care.” Bryant acknowledged the 30-member steering committee led by Rhode KIDS COUNT and the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children. Members of the steering committee include representatives from all sectors of the early learning and child care field, state department leaders, funders and key local experts and advocates.

Rhode Island is one of 21 states across the country that has developed a quality rating and improvement system to systematically measure program quality, inform consumers about quality, encourage and reward incremental quality improvements, and align supports to improve quality. “BrightStars is one of the country’s best designed quality rating and improvement systems for child care and early learning programs. Rhode Island was the first to undertake extensive focus groups with families in the design stage. And Rhode Island is one of only a few states to commission researchers to evaluate thoroughly the standards and measurement procedures. BrightStars is off to a shining start!” said Anne Mitchell, President of Early Childhood Policy Research and the former President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

All licensed child care centers, preschools, center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and family child care homes can participate in BrightStars now. BrightStars has begun development of the quality rating standards for licensed school-age programs which will receive a BrightStars rating beginning in 2010. BrightStars is funded through a public-private partnership, in recognition that an evidence-based quality rating system is a critical component of a state’s early learning system, necessary to promote children’s learning and development. Funding partners include the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, the United Way of Rhode Island, The Rhode Island Foundation, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and CVS Caremark Charitable Trust.

Nationally, quality rating and improvement systems use a star rating system. Programs participating in BrightStars meet critical state licensing requirements and receive a rating based on six quality domains 1) child's daily experience, 2) teaching and learning, 3) staff-child ratio and group size, 4) family communication and engagement, 5) staff qualifications, and 6) program management.

The research demonstrates that quality rating systems can have a major impact on program quality and on child outcomes. Mitchell said, "The BrightStars rating system is a systematic way to dramatically improve the quality of children's early learning experiences, helping all kids be ready for school. It is also an easily understandable way to communicate about the quality of programs that provide early care and education for our children."

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety and development of Rhode Island children.

The BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System was developed by a team of local early childhood and school-age care professionals and is based on national research on what constitutes quality in child care and early learning programs.

BrightStars is managed by the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children (RIAEYC), a non-profit organization and the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Visit www.BrightStars.org for more information.