

NEWS RELEASE

May 18, 2005

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MEDIA ADVISORY

**USM Ancilla Center for Children Celebrates
Collaboration with Tri-County Smart Start**

9:30 a.m. Friday, May 20, 2005

Who: The University of Saint Mary Ancilla Center for Children, the Tri-County Smart Start Program

When: 9:30 a.m., Friday, May 20, 2005

What: A celebration to acknowledge the Ancilla Center's significant improvements resulting from Ancilla's participation in several early education quality improvement programs.

Ancilla is one of 17 participants in the Tri-County Smart Start Kansas pilot project to address low-wage compensation in early learning. Ancilla also participates in the Early Childhood Excellence Project, a program that is evaluating quality through the Quality Rating System (QRS) and providing technical assistance to improve early education programs.

Ancilla received a Smart Start quality improvement grant of \$3,680 for pea gravel to improve the safety of its playground. However, a more serious problem resulting from the layout of the playground had to be addressed before the improvements could be made.

Ancilla Center Program Director Sharon Dedeke shared the dilemma with center parents. Two parents, owners of a construction and foundation company, volunteered to remove existing equipment, dig out the playground area, lay a foundation, backfill and level it, replace the playground equipment, and put in the pea gravel at no cost to the center. The in-kind donation amounted to \$24,900. With these improvements, Ancilla anticipates an improvement in its next Quality Rating System assessment.

Where: University of Saint Mary, Ancilla Center for Children
North side, University of Saint Mary campus
4100 South 4th Street,
Leavenworth, Kan.

Contacts: Call 913-758-6165 for more information

**Tri-County
Smart**

Start: Tri-County Smart Start, a collaboration between Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties in Kansas, is led by the United Way of Wyandotte County with staff support from the Mid-America Regional Council. The program is funded through a Smart Start grant from the state of Kansas and has been successful in reducing staff turnover at participating centers by 56.4%.

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