

INSPIRE

On Leadership

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The ROI that Beats the Stock Market

The buzz in recent years on the importance of early childhood has been deafening. Research has shown that investing in quality care and programming at this young age, specifically for our most disadvantaged children, set families up for success from very early-on leads to a 13% return on investment annually. Kenosha County residents of all generations, and our economy, would benefit widely from this return. Setting families up for success from very early-on is the work of our Smart Beginnings Network.

Dr. Diane Gerlach, pediatrician at Aurora Health Care and champion of this work, demonstrates this. "When children are struggling early on, they tend to have behavior problems. This adds stress to the parent who may also be struggling with parenting, and it bleeds over to their [employment] with poor

productivity and attendance. Identifying problem areas early allows for early treatment, which decreases their struggles and behavior problems, which decreases parent stress. This creates better current and future employees." Smart Beginnings brings together community partners to directly address the importance of early childhood through alignment of programs and systems.

We are already seeing small wins with this alignment. Suzi Wolf, Early Intervention Program Manager at KAC, shares, "Providing services before a child is school age is more effective and less costly because the developing brain is the most capable of change." Is this an investment we can afford not to make?

Lynn Debilzen is Manager, Birth to 8 at Building our Future. Learn more at buildingourfuturekc.org.

