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Community Family Center Calls for Urgent Support to Provide Central Home For Child & Family Service Agencies Serving Highland Park/Highwood *Reknown Economist Visits CDC - Explains Huge Economic Benefits to the Community*

(Highland Park, IL June 9, 2011)- Home is where the heart is. It's where most of us go to find safety, comfort, and support. Community service agencies also need a good home, one that provides a base of operations and the stability to be able to fulfill their missions of helping people throughout the community to live happier, fuller and more productive lives.

For five child and family service agencies that have collectively provided over 200 years of outstanding service to thousands of residents of the Highland Park/Highwood area, the demands and needs of the community have caused them to outgrow their current space and facilities. While the human services they provide are first-rate and often desperately needed, several of the agencies have existed in less than ideal conditions - makeshift spaces scattered around the community. Currently three agencies are located in basements of local buildings where they strive to overcome antiquated, overcrowded conditions to provide a positive learning and socialization experience for young children and families. Annually, these five non-sectarian, sliding fee scale, bilingual-staffed agencies provide help to approximately 3,540 participants, with an ever-growing waiting list. The dream of one day having a single central home to better serve those seeking services has always eluded them... until now.

A MODEL FACILITY WITH INTEGRATED SERVICES

Nine years ago, a visionary group of Highland Park/Highwood residents and community leaders recognized the need for a cost-efficient model facility with integrated services, and volunteered to work towards its creation: the *Community Family Center (CFC)*, a total renovation and re-purposing of the functionally-obsolete Karger Center at 1850 Green Bay Road. When completed, the new CFC will bring together five social service agencies providing much-needed child and family services (infant through seniors) – all under one roof. Not only will a single campus provide these agencies with desperately needed additional space in a healthier environment, but it will also give them the opportunity to share resources, therefore achieving a valuable and important synergism they never had before. The CFC will be home to:

- Family Network
- Family Service: Prevention, Education & Counseling
- Highland Park Community Nursery School & Day Care Center
- Tri-Con Child Care Center
- Highland Park-Highwood Home Child Care Association

Among the services these agencies provide are: **Counseling Services** - child, adult, senior, couple & family; **Community Services** - ESL classes, consultation/training for providers, community education; **Early Childhood and Children's Services** - baby and me classes, preschool, daycare, before and after school care, summer camp; and **Family Support** – prenatal/parent education classes and home visiting, drop-in program for families with children birth through three years old, referrals to community resources.

The Karger Center is a 1940s era, non ADA-accessible building and addressing the building's environmental issues is critical for health, life and safety reasons. The building is expensive to repair and the staff is expending significant time and energy making band-aid repairs over and over again. The CFC will be working with Architects Holabird & Root to re-purpose the space into a 38,375 square-foot, LEED certified facility with a variety of indoor space for programs and activities, and outdoor space for children's playgrounds. It will be equipped with shared meeting rooms, classrooms, inviting common areas, and will be available for public use on weekends and evenings.

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According to CFC President Herb Wander, having all five agencies in a single building in the heart of downtown Highland Park will create a synergy among the agencies that will better serve all of their missions. “Families will benefit from better coordination of referrals among providers within the CFC building and, ultimately, money will be saved,” Wander points out. “Many clients do not have transportation or free time to seek help, and they need help with child care while they are receiving human services. Having all five service providers under one roof offers cost efficiencies and dramatically improved productivity across the board.”

Wander explains that the location of the CFC is ideal because of several reasons: It neighbors the Lake County Health Department, is a short distance from other key services such as the Moraine Township office, is accessible to public transportation and has beautiful Sunset Park as its “backyard” - perfect for the pre-school/day care centers. “Bottom line”, Wander continues, “when completed the CFC will create a geographically-convenient, transit-oriented facility capable of providing access to critical services for young children, school age children, parents/adults and seniors all in a central location.”

AN INVESTMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

During a recent visit, nationally-noted economist Art Rolnick spoke with CFC organizers and potential project donors to explain why investing in quality early childhood education should be viewed as economic development, not just as education. “We need to rethink economic development in this country,” states Rolnick who champions the economic benefits of early education. “Economic research strongly suggests that a key ingredient to economic growth is investment in human capital. Studies show that communities achieve an economic return of \$17 for every \$1 spent on early childhood education. “Look, hands down, early education beats conventional economic development, which is little more than a bidding war between municipalities. And it stacks up well against any private return.” Rolnick says studies show that if done right and focused on at-risk children, “we can achieve measurable, sustainable outcomes.”

Twenty-two year old Monica Camacho, now a senior at DePaul University, credits her personal success to Tri-Con Child Care Center, where she attended as a child. “Tri-Con made me feel that I could achieve whatever I wanted. With their guidance, I was able to establish a sense of identity as well as an educational foundation – which has helped me become the well-rounded person I am today,” said Camacho, whose 3-year old daughter is currently enrolled in the program. “But, most importantly, Tri-Con made me feel part of a community. Every time I came back to (visit) Tri-Con, I was always treated like a part of this big family that Tri-Con has established throughout these many years of service to the community.”

With the CFC, thousands of children and individuals will receive quality family services and early childhood education program that would otherwise not be available. The impact on our community will be immeasurable. Wander stresses that among the long- term positive outcomes of the CFC, are children who are better prepared when they enter school, reduced cost for school district special education, less crime, more jobs, and spontaneous celebration of cultural diversity, which he states “is vital in today’s mixed socio-economic communities.”

Additionally, without The CFC, the Karger Center will likely be demolished and Highland Park / Highwood residents would experience:

- A shortage of subsidized day care for two-parent working families
- Wait lists for current programs which will remain overcrowded, many in inadequate facilities
- Shortage of subsidized infant/toddler center-based day care
- Shortage of sliding fee scale counseling
- Shortage of bilingual services
- Increasing costs to maintain current facilities

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AN URGENT CALL TO STEP UP NOW

The CFC, now incorporated as a 501c(3) not-for-profit, has received over 2.2 million in support from private and public sources, however, some funding is time-sensitive and contingent upon raising the balance from the private sector. Approximately, eighty-percent of the total funding must be raised by the support of individuals, foundations and businesses. The support of the city, township, county and state for this model project strengthens the case for the community to support the fundraising efforts. “There is an URGENT need for people in the Highland Park and Highwood communities to step up NOW and demonstrate that they care about the future of our citizens and local economy by donating to support this incredibly important social service-based facility,” states Amy Zisook, CFC’s Development Director.

Numerous elected officials, leading economists and civic leaders are urging the public for financial support in the form of a \$14.5 million “*Building Today For A Strong Tomorrow*” capital campaign. \$10.5 million is needed to fund the planning, remodeling, construction, equipment and furnishing costs of The CFC. An additional \$4 million is needed to establish a maintenance fund to assure the center’s operations for at least 40 years.

To help the project gain much-needed traction, The City of Highland Park, as the building owner, has generously offered the CFC a 40-year lease at a nominal cost, creating a model both for re-use of an existing building and demonstrating its commitment to working to help make vital services available to residents. “The CFC is about our community coming together to ensure a healthy and productive future for not only our neighbors and our friends, but our schools and our society overall,” said Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering, who has been on the board of the CFC for the past two years. As mayor, she would like to enhance the awareness of the community-at-large of the need to make the CFC project happen this year. “There is a very real need for populations involved to be housed in clean, safe and nurturing environments.”

To accelerate Capital Campaign pledges and illuminate the need for this project, CFC has created the *Founders’ Circle* to recognize those generous individuals who make significant gifts to support CFC’s “Building Today For A Strong Tomorrow” capital campaign. Donors to the *Founders’ Circle* can choose to make their gifts as a pledge over a specified period of time or as a one-time contribution. Cash contributions or gifts of appreciated securities will be gratefully accepted. *Founders’ Circle* donors will be recognized in a number of personal ways depending on the gift amount. Recognition opportunities include:

- Naming opportunities at appropriate levels
- Wall plaque
- Listing in printed materials recognizing campaign donations
- Special signage at celebration event(s)

A MODEL FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES

The Community Family Center will be a model for other communities in Illinois and across the nation. In an unprecedented collaborative public and private partnership, each social service-based facility will bridge diverse cultures and demonstrate the benefits of a comprehensive service site.

The development of a shared facility for the CFC will be a measure of the value that Highland Park and Highwood place on young children and their families, and the future contribution these individuals will make to our society. *If you would like to donate to the Community Family Center’s “Building Today For A Strong Tomorrow” capital campaign or The Founders’ Circle donor recognition program, please call: 847.433.5846 or go to www.communityfamilycenter.org.*

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CFC'S SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCIES

- **Family Network:** Founded in 1983 by early childhood professionals, Family Network annually provides bilingual/bicultural services to 1,593 individuals that promote the well-being of children by supporting and strengthening their families in and with their communities with social and educational programs. Services include: prenatal counseling, parental education and support, child development skills and activities for parents and their children from birth through age 4, and after school programs for grades 1-5.
www.familynetworkcenter.org
- **Family Service: Prevention, Education & Counseling:** Founded in 1930 to promote social and emotional health, strong families, and supportive communities, Family Service annually provides services to 2,010 individuals of all ages - regardless of their ability to pay - with effective, responsive and innovative prevention, education and counseling programs that will help them adapt to the ever-changing landscape of today's society. Services such as helping with child behavior problems, child abuse, teen depression/addictions, a sudden job loss, and senior citizen life transitions/ senior care giving, are but a sampling of the many valuable services provided. At some point, every family needs help. At that point, Family Service will be there.
www.famservice.org
- **Highland Park Community Nursery School & Day Care Center:** Since 1951, their nursery school and day care center provides a culturally diverse, caring, and enriched environment for children and families in our community. Annually, 120 children and their families benefit from carefully planned programs designed to enhance their emotional, social, cognitive and physical development.
www.hpcommunity.org
- **Tri-Con Child Care Center:** Founded in 1971, Tri-Con annually provides an affordable, high quality, nurturing bilingual environment to 65 young children of working families – who could otherwise not afford them. Tri-Con's programs prepare children for school by enhancing language, social and emotional development in preparation for financially-disadvantaged children to get a good start in life.
www.triconchildcare.com
- **Highland Park-Highwood Home Child Care Association:** Founded in 1996, by early childhood specialists and other community leaders, the association helps educate the community so parents understand what to look for when they seek care for their infants and children. Their mission is to ensure training and continuing education about health, safety and educational issues for licensed, professional home care specialists who care for infants and toddlers of working families. Annually, 60 individuals receive services.
www.hphhomechildcare.com

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