

MY SPECIALTY IS STRENGTHENING FAMILY BUSINESSES.

NOW I'M ASKING BUSINESSES TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES.

One of the things I've gained from my 25 years working as a Certified Family Business Specialist is a real understanding of the interdependence of families, businesses and communities. Strong families make for strong businesses. And strong families and strong businesses together make better communities.

The Springfield Day Nursery, which has been working to keep families in our community strong for 122 years, needs support from the businesses that benefit from its work. That's all of us. The Day Nursery, which was created in 1883 to provide a safe workday haven for the children of working mothers, serves more than 1,000 Hampden County kids from working class families. More than 88 percent of the kids who take part in Springfield Day Nursery programs come from below the poverty line. Without SDN, many of their parents would be unable to work. Many of those parents who could find free childcare, with a grandparent, for example, would be leaving their kids to watch *Bob The Builder* for eight hours a day. And, of course, anything that removes hard-working people from the job market hurts employers like you and your family business.

Springfield Day Nursery isn't a babysitting program. It's committed to providing kids with a learning environment, teaching learning skills, helping kids with reading, writing, math and other academic subjects, and helping kids develop social skills and make friends.

State funding for programs like the Springfield Day Nursery has been cut drastically in the last few years. That hurts the SDN's ability to provide services. Additionally, kids whose parents' income is just slightly above the poverty line are ineligible for government aid, leaving them without access to early childhood education.

I think it's time all of us in the business community stepped forward to help. But I'm not asking you to make a donation. I'm asking you to make a difference. I've worked with the Springfield Day Nursery to create Get Off On The Right Foot, a scholarship program that will allow kids to attend SDN with help from local businesses. The program matches one company with one child. You put up \$5,000 and enable a child to attend the Day Nursery for a year. That's a bargain, considering how much SDN does to strengthen our community and sustain your workforce. Studies show that for every dollar invested in early education and care, seven are saved in funding for special education, criminal justice and welfare justice. In exchange for your investment, you'll get progress reports on your sponsored student, plus correspondence — holiday cards, letters — directly from the child you helped. You'll also get the chance to participate at the Day Nursery — spending time with your sponsored student, reading to all the kids, making a difference in young lives. You can get your staff involved, too. You'll be making a statement about what you stand for. And you'll get the satisfaction that comes with knowing you've done something to keep local families, and the community we all share, growing strong.



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