

NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact: Dave Willems, cell 920-419-3550 or
Lori Van Handel, Willems Marketing, 920-831-6580 ext. 20;
lori@willemsmarketing.com

Appleton Education Foundation Forms Unique Partnership with UW-Madison to Educate Community on Brain Development

Davidson Among Four to Speak to Fox Cities Parents and Educators on Early Brain Development

APPLETON, WIS. (For Release, Jan. 9, 2008) – Fox Cities parents, educators and childcare providers will be the beneficiaries of a unique partnership announced today between the Appleton Education Foundation, UW-Madison’s renowned Waisman Center and the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

In a first-of-its-kind opportunity, four leading “brain investigators” from the Waisman Center – including Richie Davidson, one of Time Magazine’s Top 100 Minds – will address the intricacies of early brain development encompassing infants, toddlers and preschool children. The *AEF Community Education Series – Brain to Five* will feature Davidson and fellow researchers Susan Ellis Weismer, Jenny Saffran and Seth David Pollak, all noted for their groundbreaking studies related to brain behavior and learning.

Davidson, also named Madison’s Person of the Year by Madison Magazine this year, will launch the series on Wednesday, Feb. 6 at Appleton North High School at 7:30 p.m. The presentation will be held in the North High auditorium and is free to the public on an open-seating basis. Overflow seating will be available. The other presentations will follow on March 5, April 2 and April 23.

Julie Krause, Appleton Education Foundation executive director, said the goal of the cutting-edge program is to rally the community around the importance of early childhood learning and brain development while also underscoring the Appleton Area School District’s intensifying focus on school readiness through the District’s 10 Birth-to-Five initiatives adopted in 2007.

“As the Foundation moves into its second decade, we want to bring opportunities to the community that help underscore our mission of excellence in education,” said Krause. “This is a great opportunity for us to do that while also highlighting our support of birth-to-five school readiness and early learning.”

For UW-Madison and its wealth of intellectual talent, the partnership represents a chance for these world-renowned researchers to share directly with parents and care providers the very

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latest on what they're learning. "In the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea, the Waisman Center looks forward to this connection with a community in Wisconsin, where several of our investigators will share the most recent findings of their research in areas such as autism, early emotional development, and brain imaging," said Marsha Mailick Seltzer, Ph.D., Director of the Waisman Center. "We anticipate a valuable exchange with the parents and educators in the Fox Cities."

The *Brain to Five* series was announced at a news conference held at The Child Care Resource and Referral Center in Menasha. It is one of the many resources available to parents in Appleton and the surrounding Fox Cities area that specializes in helping parents and caregivers with the critical early years. Appleton Area School District Superintendent Lee Allinger has stated that educating parents and the overall community about the vast resources available in the immediate region is an important piece of the early childhood equation.

Planning for the series, Krause said, is already helping bring many of the Fox Cities resources together – including educators, childcare agencies, funding organizations and businesses – into one dialogue and the hope is that this community-wide momentum will lead to heightened awareness of early childhood learning and the importance of brain development. She noted the birth-to-five movement is gaining significant steam nationwide and Appleton and the Fox Cities have great potential to take a leading role in Wisconsin.

"Our partnership with UW-Madison is a big step toward a stronger emphasis in our community on this important topic," Krause said. "As each of the school districts grow their birth-to-five programs, the partnership can play a major role in allowing us to tap current thinking and future trends."

"This initiative is more than a one-time educational series," noted Dr. John Mielke, a founding member of the AEF board. "Our UW-Madison partners have been very enthusiastic about providing other speakers and other resources to our community and our schools. It's very exciting."

Tim Riley, board president of the Appleton Education Foundation, said the series and the overall initiative is indicative of the kind of innovative and visionary programming the Foundation would like to introduce to the community during its second decade of existence. "The community has been very responsive to the Foundation's purpose during the first 10 years and for that we are extremely grateful," Riley said. "But with budget challenges locally and statewide, we know the Foundation will need to both expand and be more proactive in ensuring educational excellence in Appleton."

Through the *Brain to Five* series, Waisman Center investigators will share their latest findings on how brains develop and how others can impact that development while also sharing information on how babies and toddlers process the world around them right from birth.

The *Brain to Five* series topics are:

- **Wed., Feb. 6, *Shaping Your Child's Brain*, Richie Davidson, Ph.D.**
- **Wed., March 5, *What Does That Gurgle Really Mean? Early Language and Your Toddler*, Susan Ellis Weismer, Ph.D.**
- **Wed. April 2, *How Babies Learn*, Jenny Saffran, Ph.D.**
- **Wed. April 23, *Children's Emotions and the Developing Brain*, Seth David Pollak, Ph.D.**

Krause said an offshoot of the Foundation's efforts is to generate greater community awareness of the AASD's 10 birth-to-five initiatives:

1. **Connecting with Early Childhood Economic Taskforce** – Bring focus to the importance of language and literacy development from birth-to-five.
2. **3- and 4-Year-Old Screenings** – Encourage all families of pre-schoolers to attend developmental screenings prior to kindergarten.
3. **Title I Preschool** – Ensure that 3- and 4-year-olds have a high-quality, developmentally appropriate environment for learning.
4. **Early Childhood Programming** – Strengthen collaboration among schools, homes and community providers by offering special education services in a child's natural environment.
5. **EvenStart** – Prepare children ages birth to eight with prerequisite education and literacy instruction, enhance parenting skills with home visits and classroom instruction and foster quality interaction between children and parents.
6. **Kindergarten Home Visits (Pilot Program)** – Build upon home-school connection with incoming kindergarten families by conducting home visits with school staff.
7. **Kindergarten Profile** – Develop a family demographic of kindergarten students entering the AASD.
8. **Parent Connection of Northeast Wisconsin Family Services (NEW Family Services)** – Offer on-site parenting classes at area elementary schools.
9. **Title 1 Parents as Teachers Project** – Engage parents of children ages birth to three in early education opportunities.
10. **Books for Babies** – Educate parents on the importance of reading to their newborns and infants.

The AASD recently contracted with The Child Care Resource and Referral, Inc. to add Amy Wilson as the District's birth-to-five coordinator to begin intensifying its efforts with these 10 initiatives.

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Waisman Center Pronunciation

According to Dave Sugar from UW-Madison, the preferred pronunciation for Waisman Center is with a hard 'a' as in Waseman Center...not with a hard 'i' as in Wiseman or Weissman Center.

Background Page

About the AEF

Established in 1997 by parents and community leaders in the Fox Cities, the Appleton Education Foundation provides classroom teachers accessible, flexible resources to enhance student learning. Just starting its second decade, the AEF has supported a variety of innovative learning projects and awarded over one million dollars in funding to educational programs that aren't financed by public budgets. www.appletoneducationfoundation.org

About the Waisman Center

For 34 years, the Waisman Center has been dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about human development, developmental disabilities and neurodegenerative diseases. It is one of nine national facilities with a Mental Retardation Development Disabilities Research Center and houses 60 labs, seven specialty clinics and the renowned Brain Imaging Laboratory. The Waisman Center is home to one of the most remarkable neuroscience research facilities in the world and is a place for discovery, care and learning as its faculty develop new therapies and treatments for people with developmental disabilities. www.waisman.wisc.edu

About the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters was founded in 1870 and is an independent, nonprofit organization connecting people and ideas from all areas of knowledge and all walks of life to celebrate thought, culture and nature in Wisconsin and help solve common problems. The Academy provides information to members and the public and creates a community where citizens and experts can share ideas. www.wisconsinacademy.org

About the AASD

The Appleton Area School District has a rich, 157-year history of educational excellence, coupled with a commitment to continue to improve its ability to meet the educational needs of present and future students. The AASD strives to address the needs of all learners and provide graduating students with the skills and knowledge to successfully pursue avenues of higher education essential to their chosen career paths. The AASD has adopted 10 Birth-to-Five Initiatives as a key component of its focus on early learning.

www.aasd.k12.wi.us

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