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UW researchers to bring their brain expertise to Appleton

Birth-to-5 focus of community education series

By **Kathy Walsh Nufer**
Post-Crescent staff writer

APPLETON — As many parents discover, the minds of young children absorb information like sponges and their brain development seems to occur at incredible speed.

Yet there is so much more for families, educators and child care

providers to know about early childhood learning, from the ramifications for school success to the economic impact down the road.

That's the driving force behind the Appleton Education Foundation's "Brain to Five" community education series that launches Feb. 6 with a presentation by Richie Davidson, a renowned researcher on early brain development.

Davidson, described as one of Time Magazine's Top 100 Minds, is from

"We want to keep the community focused on these important early years of learning."

JULIE KRAUSE,
Appleton Education Foundation
executive director

the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Waisman Center and will speak at 7:30 p.m. at Appleton North High School.

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Brain series

Featuring four leading "brain investigators" from UW's Waisman Center in Madison speaking on early brain development and their groundbreaking studies on brain behavior:

■ Feb. 6: Richie Davidson on "Shaping Your Child's Brain"

■ March 5: Susan Ellis Weismer on "What Does that Gurgle Really Mean? Early Language and Your Toddler"

■ April 2: Jenny Saffran on "How Babies Learn"

■ April 23: Seth David Pollak on "Children's Emotions and the Developing Brain"

Presentations are free and will be in the Appleton North High School Auditorium. Feb. 6 program is at 7:30 p.m. Times have not been set for others.

EDUCATION: Foundation's effort continues mission to improve school readiness

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The speaker series, which also will feature three other leading Waisman "brain investigators" on March 5, April 2 and April 23, is a first-of-its-kind partnership between AEF, Waisman and the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

Official announcement of the partnership is scheduled for 10 a.m. today at the Child Care Resource & Referral Center in Menasha.

Marsha Mailick Seltzer, Waisman director, said the investigators will share their most recent findings on

autism, early emotional development and brain imaging.

"We look forward to a valuable exchange with the parents and educators in the Fox Cities," she said in a statement.

The Appleton Education Foundation, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, is known for its grant making to school district educators who wish to do innovative and enriching activities with students. The foundation is sponsoring the speaker series in an effort to reach a wider community with "visionary" programming.

Julie Krause, Appleton Education Foundation executive



Krause

director, described the partnership with Waisman as unique and cutting edge, noting that Waisman has not partnered with a community in this way to bring the latest research in brain development to the public.

Krause said she hopes the series opens a community dialogue. With the birth-to-5 movement gaining momentum nationwide, she said, "We want to keep the community focused on these important early

years of learning."

Just planning for the series has brought many Fox Cities resources together, she said, from educators and child care agencies to businesses and funding organizations.

The Appleton Education Foundation series also supports Appleton Area School District's growing emphasis on school readiness through its 10 birth-to-5 initiatives adopted last year, plus the recent hiring of a birth-to-5 coordinator.

Judy Baseman, assistant superintendent for school services, said the district put together the 10 initiatives after observing the readiness of chil-



Baseman

dren entering the school system at 5 year olds and analyzing how current district programs meet their needs.

The list includes collaboration with several local school districts on a "Books for Babies" program aimed at encouraging reading

to newborns and infants. "Lap books" would be distributed to new parents as they leave the hospital.

"There are a lot of resources in our community and many simple things that can be done to help prepare students to be more ready for kindergarten," Baseman said.

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