

United Way Born Learning Academy Community Column

This is a column to educate your community about United Way Born Learning Academy. You can add details about your workshops, but keep it to 700 words total (standard length for community columns).

It's designed to be signed by a local United Way or United Way Born Learning Academy School.

Editorial columns usually run on the editorial page (or page facing it) in local newspapers. You can find instructions for submitting a column or letter on your newspaper's website.

Other options:

- Shorten it to 200-300 words and use as blog post on your web site.
- Craft a letter to the editor – usually 100-150 words – to run in your newspaper instead of a column.
- Ask your community partners – Chamber of Commerce, employers, human service agencies, hospital etc. – to run the column or blog post on their website.

It's the simple things that make a difference in building a young child's foundation for success in school and life. It's not flash cards or expensive educational toys – it's making your grocery trip into a treasure hunt for colors and shapes. Turning laundry sorting into a silly song about body parts. Or on your next walk, narrating your child's actions as if you were a sports announcer. Even dinner can become a learning opportunity, as your toddler builds math skills by counting eggs.

That's the idea behind the United Way Born Learning Academy, a series of six free workshops that provide families with tools and resources to turn everyday activities into early learning moments. The workshops are at night in local schools (*replace with name of school if only in 1 location in your community*), with food and childcare included and with sponsorship provided by XXX (*insert your United Way and/or community partners*) here in XXX (*insert name of your community*).

And we're seeing results. (*If you have any success stories or results from your program, add that here. It could be an anecdote or testimonial from a parent, or an evaluation factoid, like XX percent of parents who say they feel better equipped to support their child in school. If you don't have a story, just drop this paragraph.*)

Our goal is to provide families with easy, fun activities – all part of everyday chores, errands and daily life -- to enrich early learning. The reality is that children are learning constantly, right from birth. We know what happens in a child's early years matters, and that adults in their lives can provide loving, nurturing support in very simple ways to build a strong foundation for future success.

Kids who come to school without the cognitive, social-emotional, and physical skills needed to succeed have a harder time learning basics like reading. By the end of third grade, kids who can't read on grade level are four times as likely to drop out of high school, research says.

Science says the early years might be one of the most critical times for a child's development. Kids who get the right learning opportunities in their early years are more likely to graduate high school, go on to college, stay married and be productive citizens.

That's what United Way Born Learning Academy is all about. Our workshops give families the information and tools to have fun with their children -- while helping their kids get prepared for school. To find out more about the workshops, and other parent resources in XX *(insert your community here)*, call XXX *(insert a local number parents can call here, with the organization)*.

Our community is dedicated to the success of all children. All of us in *(name your community)* must do all we can to help families prepare their young children to succeed in school. XXX *(insert your sponsors and community partners here, along with details of their activities if relevant)* are to be commended for stepping up to support school readiness.

(Insert background about your school's/organization's support of early learning activities, including funding of child care or parent education programs, support of Success By 6 or other early learning initiative.)

What young children learn depends on the experiences they have each and every day, especially in the early years. At XXX *(insert your United Way or school name here)*, we see this as one of our greatest challenges -- and one of our greatest opportunities.

Please join us in this effort. When this community works together, we can do what matters most for our children. Call XXX at XXX *(insert your United Way/school & phone number here)* to find out how to get involved.

XXX is CEO/Principal of XXX United Way/School (insert your CEO's information here)

About United Way Born Learning Academy

Born Learning is a public engagement campaign helping parents, caregivers and communities create early learning opportunities for young children. Designed to support parents in their critical role as a child's first teacher, Born Learning educational materials have been available through the efforts of United Way since 2005. In 2007, United Way of Greater Cincinnati Success By 6, Kenton County Schools under the direction of former Superintendent Tim Hanner and Northern Kentucky University partnered to develop the Born Learning Academy. The Born Learning Academy is a series of parent workshops that engage expectant parents and families with young children to support early learning and school readiness. With support from Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, Born Learning Academies are designed to increase kindergarten readiness in the Northern Kentucky area, and will undergo a national replication process to increase kindergarten readiness across the United States. Early childhood faculty members Dr. Helene Arbouet Harte and Dr. Jaesook Gilbert of Northern Kentucky University developed the parent workshop

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curriculum, training guide and supplemental materials.