

Childcare

Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
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Children grow up. It seemed like a blink of an eye from the time my sons started school to when they graduated from high school. Watching over and nurturing children as they grow into adulthood is a miracle we experience over and over again. As our children grow up, we grow older and eventually the relationships change. Where once they trusted us to do what was best for them, there will come a time when we will put our trust in them to care for us. I believe it is especially important to keep this in mind as we make decisions about education. A good quality education for our children is an investment in our own future. Research shows that the number-one investment for economic development, crime reduction, and educational achievement, is in our youngest citizens.

All children deserve quality childcare and an education. The early years are the most important developmental years. We need to rethink the old ideas that learning begins when children start school. Too many children enter kindergarten without the skills to be successful in school. Quality childcare is essential to healthy development, and that takes a commitment from parents as well as local, state and national leaders.

In Ramsey County we are doing what we can to focus crime prevention money “upstream” to try and help juvenile offenders before they become entrenched in a life of crime. It is not easy and it is not cheap, but the investment has a great rate of return. For every child we steer away from a life of serious and violent crime we not only save lives and human suffering, but we as taxpayers and members of the community, save about \$3 million dollars. Stopping the intergenerational cycle of crime is also a huge benefit to society.

But we need to do more than focus on troubled youth. We need to work together and create a positive environment for all our children to grow up to realize their full potential. We need quality childcare. Research shows that children who receive early education are more likely to score higher on academic tests, enroll in and graduate from a four-year collage, delay parenthood and be gainfully employed.

Ramsey County supports information and referral services to help parents find an appropriate and qualified childcare provider that works for them. If you are looking for quality childcare or have any questions, I encourage you to call Resources for Child Caring at 651-641-0305.

The County also administers the state and federally funded childcare assistance programs to help parents pay for quality childcare and stay employed. Over the last five years we have watched the number of families served by these programs drop by over 20% due to budget cuts. We are working with organized providers to restore the funding for these vital services.

I believe Benjamin Franklin was right when he said, “a stitch in time saves nine.” The investment in early childhood development, quality childcare and education will be the best investment we can make for our children, for our pocketbooks, and for our future.

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