

Coalition brings child care providers together

Parents of kindergarten and first grade children will receive a survey this week

Pine City's Change 4 Children Coalition has been conducting many activities in the past month, in order to improve the three main goals that were set at a community wide meeting at Pine Technical College.

The three key goals set were creating a child care provider association, increasing school readiness and providing indoor play areas for children.

The first goal was addressed through an event celebrating child care providers. The appreciation dinner was held at Pine Technical College on May 8. Pine City child care providers were honored for the work they do for children. The room was festively decorated with flowers and balloons.

Certificates of appreciation and door prizes were presented to the providers.

Vicki Thrasher Cronin of Ready4K spoke on professionalism, networking and the advantages of be-

ing part of a provider association. The Pine City child care providers will meet in June (date yet to be determined) to begin discussions on organizing a Pine City Child Care Provider Association.

Mary Schwartz at Pine Technical College, schwartzm@pinetech.edu, is a good contact for more information regarding this initiative.

Secondly, the goal of increasing school readiness is being addressed through a comprehensive research project being conducted with the parents of kindergarten and first graders at Pine City Elementary School.

Three research groups met on three of the past four Thursday evenings at Cabin Coffees, with children's activities next door at Flyaways North Gymnastics. The key objective was to learn more about the needs of families in Pine City and ultimately to aid in improving children's success in school.

The coalition is conducting a larger study in which all parents of kindergarten and first grade students will be asked to complete a questionnaire in the next two weeks. Questionnaires will arrive in the mail this week.

Heather Cruz is the primary contact for this research effort.

Third, the group is working to provide better indoor play opportunities for families. It has toured the facilities created in the North Branch community and has researched temporary solutions in Pine City where families could have access to existing indoor play areas in town. Several proposed sites have been identified and further research is being done to solidify these opportunities.

A grant from the Minnesota Initiative Foundation has made it possible to create the coalition and address the goals that have been established.



Bringing area child care providers together to talk about the needs of young children in the Pine City area is one of the goals of the Change 4 Children Coalition.