

## Themes in Common

Each of our ECI coalitions is unique and sets priorities based upon the characteristics of its community, the ideas identified during the Community Profile Surveys, the Speak Out panel and the Visioning session. In spite of the individuality of each community coalition, common themes emerge in the work:

- Partnerships among early care and education entities: All nine of our coalitions that have reached the implementation of action projects have helped create cultures of cooperation in their communities. Some new service partnerships have occurred simply because all those working with young children were meeting together regularly.
- Raising the quality of care and education: Every coalition has implemented action projects to enhance the quality of child care, to improve relationships and professional networking among all early childhood professionals and to bring all those who provide care for young children together to learn. Often, these projects involve collaboration with the public schools and/or the Child Care Resource and Referral Network.
- Filling gaps in service: The information gathered during the early phase of the ECI often reveals gaps in service such as families in need, children being left out of programs, or a needed service that is unavailable to parents. Coalitions have, in many cases, developed projects to fill these gaps in the most appropriate way for their community.
- Community awareness and commitment to young children: Larger or more attention-getting projects such as new playground installations, front page newspaper articles, whole-community fairs or events can serve the purpose of demonstrating the community's acknowledgement of young children – to let families and the public know that children are here, they are important and they do figure into the life of the community.
- Advocacy for early childhood: Our region's coalitions do an excellent job of contacting and meeting with all candidates prior to elections, to impress upon them the importance of the early years and investing in our youngest citizens. Coalitions will continue to be in relationship with their legislators, reminding them to keep young children as a top priority.