

## News Release

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### **Lilly extends grant for Early Childhood Center at IU Kokomo**

**KOKOMO, Ind.** – An Indiana University Kokomo program with the goal of preparing children to succeed in school has received an extension of its Lilly Endowment Inc. grant for an additional two years.

Marilyn Skinner, director of the IU Kokomo Center for Early Childhood Education, said the extension allows programming to continue through the end of 2014.

“Our role is the help our community know the importance of early childhood education, provided by the parent or some other adult, so that the children of our community will be successful when they enter school,” Skinner said. “This grant extension is recognition by the Lilly Endowment that we are doing important work.”

The center’s signature program is “Totes for Tots,” which provides a bag of age-appropriate books, toys, and learning materials to Howard County children from birth to kindergarten, free each month.

The center, 2725 S. LaFountain St., also publishes a monthly informational newsletter for parents, and provides materials for Kokomo Urban Outreach’s Baby University. It has an activity room open weekdays, for parents, grandparents, and other caregivers to come play and learn with their children, and often gives away books. All of its programs are free.

Skinner said their goal is to support parents in their role as their child’s first teacher.

“Research on parental involvement with a child, and the growth of a child’s brain in the first five years of life, shows how important it is to provide educational experiences in those first five years,” Skinner said. “We want to provide parents the books, toys, games, and an age-appropriate environment for the children to play.”

Skinner said the extension gives the center two more years to use the \$1.5 million Community Alliances to Promote Education (CAPE) grant funds originally awarded in 2005. It originally was to end in 2010, but she has been able to save money by using resources for free books, and by accepting donations of toys from families whose children have outgrown them. This is the third grant extension.

The CAPE initiative was aimed at boosting educational attainment throughout Indiana, by helping individual counties address their areas' most compelling education needs. The Community Foundation of Howard County partnered with IU Kokomo to apply for the grant.

For more information about the Early Childhood Education Center, call Skinner at 765-455-9427 or e-mail [msskinne@iuk.edu](mailto:msskinne@iuk.edu).

*Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.*

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