

## **Northeast Ohio Program Celebrates Resilience!**

Starting Point for Child Care and Early Education, Northeast Ohio's early care and education resource and referral agency, received the Devereux Early Childhood Initiative's (DECI) *Program of Excellence Award* at a May 9 event, *A Celebration of Resilience*, at Cleveland's Holiday Inn Select. This is the first time Devereux has awarded this distinction, which recognizes the many different ways Starting Point is implementing the DECA concept--for children, families, child care programs and communities.

In granting the award DECA officials noted that the Starting Point program is unique both in its comprehensive approach and in demonstrating how the overall community can benefit. DECI National Project Director Linda K. Likins noted, "If you could take what Starting Point is accomplishing in Cleveland and replicate this in cities across the U. S. A., the Devereux Early Childhood Initiative's vision would be realized--to change the way this nation prioritizes children's social and emotional health."

Starting Point has partnered with DECI since 2003, training and mentoring teachers and implementing the program in centers in its four Northeastern Ohio counties---Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga and Lake. Today over 228 area classrooms at 73 sites are implementing the DECA program. Over 500 early childhood educators and professionals have received DECA training.

This commitment is expected to yield E-DECA results for over 2,000 children in Starting Point's DECA project and an additional 2,000 children from other partnering agencies throughout the counties. Starting Point anticipates that the E-DECA system will capture over 7,000 pre and post assessments with over 3,000 being completed by parents for the 2007-2008 school year. And that is just the beginning.

Starting Point has also developed some unique tools. At the May 9 event, Starting Point unveiled two new books to expand the understanding and reach of the DECA program to children, their families and early childhood teachers. One is a children's book, *I Have Magic Helpers*, which uses rhymes to show children the "magic helpers" (protective factors) they have inside of them to help build resilience. The other book, *Building Blocks*, is a companion piece that offers ideas on how teachers and parents can foster resilience in children. Geauga County also produces a newsletter with tips for teachers on implementing DECA.

The May 9 event, which recognized early childhood programs and communities that have embraced the DECA program, attracted 150 "friends of Devereux" and featured a moving video showing DECA in action at area child care centers. To view this video, click on the following link: [www.addsight.com/client/startingpoint/preview1.html](http://www.addsight.com/client/startingpoint/preview1.html). Director Likins also addressed the gathering and, while in the area, observed classrooms at Notre Dame preschool in Geauga County, Lakewood Hospital Child Care, Ministerial Day Care Association (Head Start) and St. Augustine Manor Child Care in Cuyahoga County.

Starting Point Executive Director Billie Osborne-Fears expressed her surprise and deep appreciation for the *Program of Excellence Award*, noting her "gratitude to the early childhood professionals, parents, and children who welcome our efforts to build a more resilient generation" as well as to the many "enthusiastic funders and collaborators" including the Ashtabula County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, Cuyahoga County Invest In Children, Cuyahoga County Community Mental Health Board, Geauga County Department of Job and Family Services, United Way of Lake County, and the Ohio Department of Mental Health.