

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation Commits an Additional \$25 Million to Add an Early Childhood and Community Center to the Foundation-Funded Community Care Campus Currently Under Construction

Decatur, IL (April 4, 2019) - The Howard G. Buffett Foundation today announced a new \$25 million commitment to build a combined Early Childhood, Senior, and Community Center on the new Community Care Campus currently under construction in downtown Decatur. This brings the Foundation's current expenditures and commitments to the Community Care Campus to \$55 million.

The addition of an 80,000 square-foot facility located between Condit and King Streets will accommodate both Baby TALK and Decatur Macon County Opportunities Corporation (DMCOC) and expand the Community Care Campus to 27 acres. This new Center, combined with the Foundation's prior funding of the Community Care Campus, will truly provide low-income families in Macon County with a "one-stop" solution to access job training, employment readiness, utility assistance, homeless services, senior services, weatherization assistance, healthcare, substance abuse treatment, parent training, GED classes, alternative education for teen mothers, fatherhood programming, and early childhood education. This holistic approach creates a system of support and care that will be a national best practice model for communities around the country to learn from and replicate.

"I want to commend Baby TALK and DMCOC for working collaboratively and quickly to make this idea a reality," said Howard G. Buffett, Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. "Funding this project is the easy part – these two organizations will have the challenge of coordinating the variety of services that will be offered. There's no question that by combining these services in one location that we will make it easier for families to access them but more importantly, by having these service providers work collaboratively with families, we believe we can improve outcomes and make more efficient use of support resources."

The new facility will provide birth to senior services in one central location. The building will include a separate wing for each agency and a common area with access to both agencies for the community. The new facility will allow both DMCOC and Baby TALK to expand its services to the community.

DMCOC will expand its senior services program to include a senior center, while continuing to provide transportation and meals to seniors throughout Macon County. All of DMCOC's services will be located in the new facility, including the Anna Waters Head Start program with capacity to continue serving 378 3-5 year-old children. Additional services provided by DMCOC include utility assistance, weatherization services, emergency and transitional housing assistance, job training, and employment readiness support. "Offering all of our services in one location alongside Baby TALK and Crossing Healthcare will support increased collaboration and improve access to those in need," said Tara Murray, Executive Director of DMCOC.

Baby TALK will expand its early care and education capacity to serve 128 children in 16 birth to three-year old classrooms. Administrative offices, a family education room and a training space is also included in the facility in order for Baby TALK to host state-wide trainings for early childhood professionals. "Investments in the education of young children and supports offered to their families at the combined facility will make a long-lasting impact on the most vulnerable families in Decatur. Positive outcomes

later in life are directly linked to vital relationships and resources made available during a child's early years," said Cindy Bardeleben, Executive Director of Baby TALK.

The facility will include a total of 40 early childhood classrooms which will serve over 500 children. The facility will be built in accordance with the latest research to ensure children receive the highest quality educational environment. Ample classroom size and outdoor play spaces have been taken into consideration. Classroom observation spaces and Family Engagement Specialist offices are located near each classroom. Transition services and alignment of practices between Baby TALK and DMCOC will occur in order to provide continuity of care to families.

In addition to the provision of early childhood education for children who qualify for Early Head Start and Head Start services, a limited number of children of employees who work on the Community Care Campus will be able to obtain child care services at the facility through private pay. This innovative approach to service-delivery will further integrate services on the Community Care Campus.

The location of Crossing Healthcare, DMCOC, and Baby TALK on the Community Care Campus will provide a trustworthy, seamless system of support to include coordination of services for families utilizing Crossing Healthcare's opioid treatment center and facilitation of medical care for Head Start and Early Head Start families. "Over 80% of children enrolled in DMCOC's Anna Waters Head Start program utilize Crossing Healthcare as their medical home," said Tara Murray, Executive Director of DMCOC.

Operating together, Crossing Healthcare, DMCOC, and Baby TALK will allow families to build trust with social service agencies. "Parents are often reluctant to access services for their children due to a fear of Child and Family Services involvement. Building trusting relationships with families is essential to overcoming this barrier and ensuring the success of children." said Cindy Bardeleben, Executive Director of Baby TALK. "When educators and medical providers work together around the health and well-being of a child and family we are able to better identify areas of need. Together we can work with that child and family to solve problems, improve health and positively impact that child's educational trajectory," noted Tanya Andricks, CEO of Crossing Healthcare.

"Changing the future of our community won't happen overnight, but thanks to yet another gift from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, we're able to accelerate the process. This new joint center enables us to reach those most at risk and in need of assistance. It ensures an essential head start for our youngest citizens and assistance for our vulnerable senior population. This joint facility represents another life-changing opportunity for Decatur residents, putting the help they need within reach," states Decatur Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe.

This \$25 million project will also have a significant economic impact in our community. A total of 142 jobs will be created and supported across all industries for the life of the project with a total wage impact of \$8.35 million. The total economic impact of this new construction project is \$33.6 million.

Construction is projected to take 18-24 months and is being led by Romano Company.

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(Note: The Howard G. Buffett Foundation is not available for comment.)