

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Childcaring Receives \$50,000 Grant from B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation *Good Start Grants Makes Child Care More Affordable for Eligible Families in Marathon Co.*

Merrill, WI, (April 17, 2015) – Childcaring, Inc is excited to announce B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation has awarded \$50,000 for Good Start Grants! Good Start Grants provides financial assistance for eligible families in Marathon County to ensure they have access to quality, affordable child care.

Good Start Grants also receives \$300,000 from United Way of Marathon County each year; the program is currently in its second year of the United Way 3 year grant cycle. “The funding received from United Way in 2015 will help more than 38 families and 53 children have access to quality child care. However, we currently have 15 families on our wait list” says Rachele Cherek, Program Coordinator for Good Start Grants. “This funding from the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation will help reduce that wait list and allow for additional families and children to have the same opportunity to attend quality child care. This grant will help make child care more affordable for eligible families.”

For more than 15 years, United Way of Marathon County has helped families pay for quality child care in the Wausau area. In 2010 a collaboration of early childhood partners began to strategize the possibility of this program reaching more Marathon County families. After months of developing policies, procedures, and funding formulas, the collaborative group renamed the sliding fee program, Good Start Grants.

“United Way is committed to ensure Marathon County is a safe and caring community where everyone achieves success in school, is financially secure and has good health. Experiences that do or do not happen in a child’s early years influence whether or not they will be prepared for school and the likelihood they will graduate. These early life experiences impact the person they will become throughout their life: what they know, how they interact with others, and what they cultivate for the future of our community.” says Deanna Schuette, Associate Director, Community Impact at United Way of Marathon County. “United Way investments in supports like Good Start Grants ensure both the financial stability of local families along with access to the highest quality of care for their children. Quality child care is a critical component in early childhood development. This investment places local families and children on a track for success.”

Currently, Good Start Grants is able to pay 70% of a child’s tuition at their child care program. The child care program must participate in YoungStar, Wisconsin’s quality rating and improvement system, and be rated at a 3, 4, or 5 Star level. Marathon County families may be eligible if they do not qualify for Wisconsin’s child care assistance program, Wisconsin Shares, and are still below 300% of the federal poverty level.

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Childcaring Office Locations

Wisconsin Rapids Office ••• 1107 West Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495 **p)** 715.423.4114 **f)** 715.423.2444

Merrill Office ••• 407 West Main Street, Merrill, WI 54452 **p)** 715.539.9779 **f)** 715.539.9771

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According to data gathered by Childcaring, Inc. from regulated child care programs across Marathon County, families can expect to pay about \$182 per week or \$9,464 per year for full time care of their infant. For the family who has an infant and a three-year old, this cost becomes nearly \$337 per week or \$17,524 per year in the Wausau area. So the cost of child care becomes more expensive than many families' housing or transportation costs and much more than the cost of food in any given month. To make quality child care more affordable for families, the fees parents pay must be supplemented by outside investments.

"The main focus of the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation's mission is to strengthen our community by "providing opportunities". By making this investment in the Good Start Grants program, we believe we are doing just that," said Brian Gumness, Executive Director of the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation. "We are helping to provide opportunities to families that need the most help with affording the cost of quality child care. Childcaring, Inc. and their Good Start Grants program play a vital role in the early childhood development of the youth in our community. The Board of Trustees of the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation are proud to be a partner in this effort."

"We are extremely lucky that the Marathon County community recognizes and values the importance of quality child care opportunities for our children" says Micki Krueger, Assistant Director of Childcaring. "We truly believe that quality child care provides a strong foundation for future success – it is a smart, economic investment!" Research shows that the achievement gap appears long before children reach kindergarten. At-risk children who don't receive a high-quality early childhood education may be more likely to: drop out of school, become a teen parent, be placed in special education, never attend college, or be arrested for a violent crime. Quality early childhood programs offer a great return to society.

If you or someone you know is interested in investing in Good Start Grants and making quality child care more affordable for families, please contact Childcaring.

Childcaring, Inc. is your local child care resource and referral agency; a United Way partner program. For more information on Good Start Grants please visit our website (<http://www.childcaring.org/family-payment.html>) or contact our office at 800.628.8534.

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About Childcaring

Childcaring is your local resource and referral agency dedicated to providing quality child care information, and partnering with parents, care providers, business leaders, and community organizations to make quality care available to Central Wisconsin families in Adams, Clark, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Taylor, Waushara, and Wood counties. To learn more about Childcaring visit: www.childcaring.org

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