

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Stronger Together: New Jersey Adults 50+ Join Law Enforcement Leaders, Red Bank Superintendent in Supporting Preschool**

*In a tough economy, investments in early education yield successful students and responsible adults*

RED BANK, N.J. – Surrounded by preschool students at one of New Jersey’s most successful early education programs, New Jerseyans age 50+ took a stand for early childhood education this morning, highlighting older adult support for preschool – and its rewards for all ages.

Joined by New Jersey Senator Jennifer Beck (R-12), Red Bank Borough Schools Superintendent Dr. Laura Morana, Monmouth County Sheriff Shaun Golden, New Jersey State Triad President Captain Thomas Fatigante and other education, law enforcement and aging services leaders, members of Generations United’s New Jersey Seniors4Kids urged state lawmakers to increase the availability of voluntary, quality preschool education for New Jersey’s children.

“A lot of politicians give lip service to building a future for our children, but now is the time to act for early education. Increasing access to quality preschool builds a foundation for lifetime success, improving our communities for people of all ages,” said Roberta Eisner, 65, a member of Seniors4Kids from Matawan, N.J.

New Jersey Seniors4Kids asked lawmakers to maintain existing funds for preschool in the proposed budget for FY2011 and secure additional funding to expand preschool as envisioned in the School Funding Reform Act at a news conference held Friday morning at Red Bank Primary School in Red Bank. Seniors4Kids also released a fact sheet documenting older adult support for preschool and evidence that preschool builds stronger communities.

Monmouth County Sheriff Shaun Golden said, “Education is the key that opens the door of opportunity. As a father, I appreciate and understand the importance of early education to all of our children. As the administrator of Monmouth County’s largest law enforcement agency, I can see the long-term results when early education, and continued education, is not offered or expanded. I am proud to support Seniors4Kids as they work to continue and expand pre-kindergarten programs, not only in Monmouth County, but nationwide.”

“Seniors are one of this country’s most valuable untapped natural resources,” added Captain Thomas Fatigante, president of New Jersey State Triad, a program that links law enforcement with aging services and the community. “They have time, talent and a lifetime of experience to bring to any undertaking. New Jersey State Triad looks forward to partnering on this intergenerational initiative to tap this untapped natural resource, our seniors, to promote early education.”

Educators and advocates also added their support for quality early childhood education.

“As someone who has devoted my career to helping children achieve their potential, I have seen firsthand that quality preschool prepares students for success,” said Red Bank Borough Schools Superintendent Dr. Laura Morana. “It is gratifying to have support from both older adults and law enforcement leaders in this effort to expand the valuable effects of pre-k to all New Jersey’s children.”

“Quality early childhood is the best way of closing both the achievement and opportunity gap for children,” said Cynthia Rice, Senior Policy Analyst for the Association for Children of New Jersey. “Investing in quality early childhood education also benefits the entire community. Research shows that quality preschool cuts drop-out rates, creates a more qualified workforce and decreases crime rates.”

The news conference was full of intergenerational connections. Budding musicians from the Red Bank Primary School Pre-K Orchestra greeted members of New Jersey Seniors4Kids as they arrived. A team of older adult puppeteers – including retired teachers – entertained young and old alike with an intergenerational puppet show. To ensure that the intergenerational connections continue, New Jersey Seniors4Kids donated ten books featuring older adult characters or aging in a positive light to the school.

“Older adults care about educating the youngest generation,” said New Jersey Seniors4Kids State Coordinator John Wanat, who presented the books to the school with Sen. Beck, who added comments about the importance of quality education.

“In tough economic times, the investments we make in early childhood education have short- and long-term rewards for New Jerseyans of all ages,” Wanat said.

*Seniors4Kids is an initiative by Generations United, the national nonprofit that works to improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all. In New Jersey, we work in partnership with the Association for Children of New Jersey to create a statewide network of community leaders and grassroots volunteers that work to increase the availability and quality of pre-k. For more information about Generations United and Seniors4Kids, please visit [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org) and [www.seniors4kids.org](http://www.seniors4kids.org).*