

## **Early Childhood Education Alliance, Inc. Established**

The Greater Alliance Foundation has formed a non-profit Ohio 501c3 organization to promote and oversee a new early childhood education initiative, the Early Childhood Education Alliance, Inc. The Mount Union College Board of Trustees and the Alliance City Schools Board of Education have both approved resolutions to form a collaborative program of study between the College, the City Schools and the City of Alliance. Other partners in the collaborative project are National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC) accredited day care programs: Interfaith Child Development Center (at Christ United Methodist Church) and First Baptist Nursery School & Child Care Center (at First Baptist Church).

The Greater Alliance Foundation approved a grant of \$46,000 to support the first six months of operation. For the program to function, a six member Board of Trustees representatives, appointed by Mount Union College, the City Schools and the City of Alliance, will oversee the project, including the hiring of a fulltime director.

"We're proud to announce the selection of Joe French of North Canton as our project director," says Carol Canavan, assistant vice president for academic affairs, Mount Union College" and president of the board of trustees for the Early Childhood Education Alliance. "We had an excellent response to our request for applicants from many qualified individuals. However, Joe's experience proved to be exactly what we require. "

In this new position, French will have administration, operations, technical and financial duties. He will be working to establish policies and procedures. "Initially he'll develop a thorough assessment of early education and child care needs in Alliance," Canavan says.

"Based on the identified community needs and assets, he'll then develop programs" parent outreach activities and community linkages to enhance early childhood education in the Alliance community," she adds.

"It's exciting that the community is coming together to serve young children," says French, who began in his position August 7. "There are 2300 children under the age of five in Alliance. It's a win-win. The children get the services they need. It's impressive that the community recognized that these children are the next generation of future leaders and employees. Alliance is being proactive in meeting needs up front so that it will not have put money into retroactive programs --such as jail services --at the end."

French's expertise will be particularly helpful in the securing of grants to maintain the program. In his previous positions, he successfully applied for and received grants from the Sisters of Charity Foundation, Hoover Foundation, Stark Community Foundation and others. From May 2006 to the present, he served as executive director of Canton Calvary Mission. He was also director for seven years of Little Angels Preschool Zion Child Development Center, a non-profit preschool child care center, which he successfully led to NAEYC accreditation.

French's office will be in South Lincoln School, which was recently converted into an Early Learning Center to serve all Alliance Kindergarten-aged students in one location.