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**STUDY ON EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT TO SEND
STRONG MESSAGE TO LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

HOUSTON, Tx. (June 24, 2002) . . . What does the brain development of a newborn have to do with educating and training Houston's future workforce?

"Plenty," says Glenda Kirshbaum, Director of Early Connections, a project of the Greater Houston Collaborative for Children, formed to raise local awareness of new research findings associated with the long-term effects of early brain development. According to Kirshbaum, researchers have found that the quality of interactive nurturing activities, such as talking, reading, singing, and playing during a child's first six years of life have a significant impact on one's intellect and emotional make-up as an adult.

This message, she says, has Houston's business and philanthropic community standing up and taking notice.

"Companies have always mentored at the high school level in order to improve the quality of Houston's workforce," says Kirshbaum. "But businesses are beginning to understand that building a strong community, and hence a strong employee base, actually starts the moment a child is born."

Several organizations appear to be taking the message to heart. Bank of America, Initiatives for Children, and St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities have joined the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and the Greater Houston Community Foundation to provide initial funding for Early Connections.

With this support, Early Connections has completed intensive telephone surveys and neighborhood-based focus groups of Houston parents and care givers; the results of which show confusion and misinformation among adults about the first years of a child's life. Fortunately, the same Houston study also reflects a high level of interest among parents and care givers in receiving research-based information.

DYG, Inc., a highly regarded research company led by Daniel Yankelovich, conducted a similar study on a national level. According to Kirshbaum, the findings in the Houston study mirrored the results of the national survey.

"Based on our research findings, Early Connections is uniquely positioned to play an important role in helping adults understand the critical first years of life," says Kirshbaum. "We look at it as an investment in Houston's future."

Early Connections, 713-572-0200, is a project of the Greater Houston Collaborative For Children (GHCC), a non-profit supporting organization of the Greater Houston Community Foundation. GHCC is composed of philanthropic organizations, service providers, city and county government, the business community, academic institutions and concerned citizens who share a common desire to create a community where children can reach their full potential.

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