

# THE BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD FUND

Senator Ben Nelson  
720 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

February 12, 2010

Dear Senator Nelson,

On behalf of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and as Chair of the Building Bright Futures Early Childhood Task Force, I am writing to indicate my strong support for VNA's request for funding to implement home visitation with pregnant and parenting teens in the Omaha community.

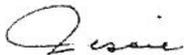
As you are well aware, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF) is the part of Susie Buffett's foundation dedicated to giving our most vulnerable and youngest children a great start in life through comprehensive, highly effective services in the first five years of life. For the past two years, Educare of Omaha has partnered with VNA to work with one of the most at risk populations- teen parents who have not yet graduated from high school- through a program called Love and Learn. We combine the home visitation services provided by VNA with the center based experiences offered by Educare. This collaborative strategy is achieving great results for two generations- keeping mom in school and on track for high school graduation and providing their children with a strong foundation for future learning.

The Love and Learn program is the very kind of strategy the Building Bright Futures (BBF) initiative would like to see expanded in Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The overarching goal of BBF is to increase the number of children from families of low income who graduate from high school. Historically, less than 50% of the hundreds of teen mothers in Omaha schools graduate. Furthermore, the BBF Board recognizes the critical relationship between experiences in the earliest years of life and eventual success in formal schooling. These two issues- low graduation rates for teen moms and the importance of the first five years of development- led to BBF recommending the expansion of multi-disciplinary home visitation programs like Love and Learn to reach 1000 children of teen parents.

VNA has a strong history of developing and implementing innovative programs to meet the health care needs of our community. Their partnerships with other community based agencies like Educare along with their use of proven home visitation curriculums like Growing Great Kids are why their programs get good results. Investing in VNA's home visitation services for teen parents is a smart investment of public resources.

Thank you for your consideration of my recommendation to support VNA's request for funds.

Sincerely,



Jessie Rasmussen  
Vice President  
Buffett Early Childhood Fund

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