



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MINNESOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS RECOGNIZE

¡Bienvenido Bebés! (Welcome Babies!)

The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) presents the Innovative Programming Award

St. Cloud, MN, April 10, 2025 – **The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) announces that its 2025 Innovative Programming Award is being given to ¡Bienvenido Bebés! (Welcome Babies!) a collaborative effort between St. Paul Public Schools ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education) and Ramsey County Public Health.** The award is presented to acknowledge MNAFEE's appreciation of contributions to children, parents and families and/or the publicly funded programs that serve them.

This program addresses a community need that was discovered as data was reviewed from Welcome New Baby ECFE classes and the Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting program (MECSH) in Ramsey County. Qualitative data from Ramsey County Public Health staff suggested that, particularly within the Latine population, families were feeling isolated. This may be partially attributed to the Latine peoples in the Twin Cities coming from varying geographical regions that may not share cultural linkages beyond language. Enrollment data from the St. Paul ECFE Welcome New Baby classes revealed low participation rates from Latine families, and thus, Bienvenidos Bebes was created!

The class began as a pilot program in the spring of 2023 and it has continued to be offered throughout the 2024-2025 school year. Transportation to and from the program is provided by Ramsey County Public Health. An agency interpreter is also provided by the Ramsey County Family Health Division. The class is staffed by one licensed early childhood teacher/parent educator from ECFE and by nurses from the Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting program. The one and a half hour classes are offered weekly in an ECFE classroom. There are three, 9-12 week sessions per year for parents and babies who are ages birth to six months. All sessions have been full or nearly full. Participants are concurrently being served by Ramsey County MECSH.

The class format and curriculum were co-designed by ECFE and Ramsey County Public Health Nurses. This has resulted in a robust, culturally relevant model that covers topics such as infant development, nutrition, health and safety, transition to parenthood and parental self-care. It's also become a safe place to discuss and seek help for concerns such as postpartum depression, anxiety and stress.

At the end of a family's participation in ¡Bienvenido Bebés! (Welcome Babies!), an ECFE Spanish speaking Family Engagement staff member assists them in signing up for an ECFE class for Spanish speaking families. Families have asked to stay connected after their participation in ¡Bienvenido Bebés! (Welcome Babies!). This has resulted

in the Ramsey County Family Health Division hosting monthly summer gatherings at a park for Spanish/English speaking families which includes transportation, snacks, and an interpreter.

There are many benefits for child and family participants who attend ¡Bienvenido Bebés! (Welcome Babies!) including: families developing a support system, sharing knowledge, reaping mental health benefits and participating in socialization opportunities. The program has also enhanced the link between St. Paul Public Schools ECFE and Ramsey County Public Health staff which has resulted in the formation of bi-directional relationships which have improved family engagement, reduced barriers to families accessing services and enhanced communication between programs. All involved in the effort believe that investment in the program has reaped outstanding results for children, families, staff and the community.

¡Bienvenido Bebés! (Welcome Babies!) was recognized at the MNAFEE Annual Conference in St. Cloud on April 10, 2025. Mary Mischke from St. Paul Public Schools ECFE and Sydney Ewest and Beverly Gerdes from Ramsey County Public Health accepted the award.

About MNAFEE: The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) is a non-profit association promoting parent education, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and early childhood programming in public schools.

About the Innovative Programming Award: The Innovative Programming Award is presented to outstanding projects that exemplify the vision/mission of MNAFEE and are innovative approaches to addressing a community need through cooperation and teamwork amongst individuals and/or organizations, and use of resources. The project could be a one-time event or an ongoing activity that is associated with a parent education, Early Childhood Family Education and/or public school preschool in Minnesota. Its focus could be on children, parents, families or professionals.

Nominees for the MNAFEE Friend of the Year Award must:

- Include at least one member of MNAFEE
- Exemplify the vision/mission of MNAFEE:
 - Vision:** All families have access to comprehensive, high quality parent education and early childhood programming in public schools.
 - Mission:** The mission of Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) is to promote, advocate for, and strengthen parent education, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and early childhood programming in public schools.
- Address a community need
- Demonstrate cooperation between individuals and/or organizations
- Enhance the lives of young children, parents, families or professionals