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MEDIA CONTACT:

Catherine Campbell

Phone: 713-572-3222 (O) or

713-302-3269 (cell)

Collaborative for Children Launched to Impact the Lives of Houston's Children and Families

Helping Houston's Children Get Off to a Good Start

Houston, TX (June 29, 2004) – Today the Collaborative for Children was launched to dynamically impact the lives of young children and families to better prepare them for the future. The Collaborative for Children was formed from the merger of the Greater Houston Collaborative for Children (GHCC) and Initiatives for Children (IFC), two non-profit organizations with more than 27 years of combined experience in serving the community.

This new partnership enhances the opportunities for Houston's children during the early years. Studies document how a quality early learning environment positively contributes to a child's later academic performance in school and in achieving success in life. The studies conclude that since 90% of brain growth occurs before age five, it is particularly important that children have a positive and stimulating learning experience in those early formative years. The Collaborative for Children seeks to make the best use of this window of opportunity to help children have a good start in life.

During the launch event, which was held at the JPMorgan Chase Back-up Child Care Center, Mayor Bill White unveiled the new logo and discussed how the new organization will respond to the critical need to improve early care and education in Houston, stating, "This remarkable effort brings two strong organizations together to benefit young children, their families and caregivers, and our community. All children deserve to be cared for in a quality environment and we *all* win when we make a commitment to the education of young children. Our youngest children, as Houston's future workforce, are our city's most important resource and the Collaborative for Children is one of the most positive forces working on their behalf."

Over the years, both GHCC and IFC have been recognized as leaders in providing programs and services that help families best meet the needs of their children. Both organizations have excelled at working with others to extend resources and expand the impact of their service delivery through collaboration. Because of the similarity of missions, philosophy,

purposes, and a mutual respect for each other's excellence in service delivery, GHCC and IFC merged to better meet the needs of children and families in our community.

The merger combines the administrative infrastructures and programmatic expertise of these two organizations with complimentary services. A single entity is better able to address the challenges that lie ahead in strengthening the quality and expanding access to early care and education. One organization will also be more effective in communicating with parents and stakeholders about the resources available for young children.

Carol Shattuck, President of the Collaborative for Children stated, "Our goal is to be the first point of contact for families seeking information about child development and early care and education for their children. The Collaborative for Children will work with partners in the community to improve the system of care for young children and their families in Houston. We believe that an investment in these important developmental years will pay significant dividends as children grow and mature and eventually take their place as productive adults in society."

Young children from birth to age six and their families are the primary focus of the Collaborative for Children. The Collaborative for Children offers programs and services related to early care and education: (1) Educating parents of young children and helping them locate child care, including school age care and resources for children with special needs; (2) Offering services, resources and training for child care professionals; (3) Providing community education about the importance of child development from the earliest years; (4) Partnering with others in the community to connect/coordinate resources and services on early care and education; (5) Working to strengthen the overall system of early care and education; and (6) Improving the quality of child care through public policy research and activities.

Rodney Nathan, incoming Chair of the Collaborative for Children and former Chair of IFC, stated "This merger to form the Collaborative for Children gives us the opportunity to extend our reach and better serve the diverse needs of Houston's children and families. The Collaborative for Children will work hard to fulfill its mission to build and support families and communities that prepare young children for success in school and life."

For more information about the Collaborative for Children, please call 713-572-3222 or visit www.collabforchildren.org.