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News

Early childhood forum at CCSU

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By LISETTE VELASQUEZ

Staff Writer

NEW BRITAIN — The New Britain Early Childhood Collaborative will host an early childhood forum at Central Connecticut State University Monday to discuss early childhood initiatives and achievements.

Educators, child-care advocates, community leaders, politicians and philanthropic leaders will welcome an expert on early childhood initiatives Dr. Joan Lombardi. She is recognized as a national and international expert on early childhood and is the Deputy Assistant Secretary & Interdepartmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

According to Merrill Gay of the New Britain Early Childhood Collaborative, Lombardi is an author and recognized leader on children's issues who will present an overview on early childhood development initiatives at the federal level and the importance of community planning. Blueprint for New Britain's Children, a comprehensive study, strategy and action plan on how the city is addressing its early childhood initiatives will be one of three presented. There are 20 communities who have completed blueprints.

In New Britain Gay said 80 percent of children, age 4, and 50 percent children, age 3, have access to an early childhood development program. However, there still is a huge gap for quality child care for children under 3, Gay said.

"We'll discuss what works and what are the changes that need to still be made, to make it work better," Gay said. "She's coming here because she thinks what we're doing here is ground-breaking work.

Although many look to the school system and blame it for poor achieving students, Gay said they have found five indicators that can hinder a child's success in school: low birth weight, mother's education, childhood obesity, reading level by third-grade and access to health care.

Gay said that low-birth-weight children are 79 percent less likely to graduate from high school by age 19 and are far more likely to drop out or stay back.

The moderator Monday night is Elaine Zimmerman of the Connecticut Commission on Children. State Rep. John Geragosian, D-New Britain, is a member of the panel.

The event features the Discovery communities of New Britain, Torrington and New Haven, who will discuss and showcase their early childhood blueprints. Discovery is a Graustein Memorial Fund initiative that aims to effect community change and policy reform that will create an early childhood system that ensures early learning success for all children.

The event will be at CCSU's Alumni Hall, Student Center, refreshments at 5 p.m. and program begins at 6 p.m. This

event is sponsored by Graustein Memorial Fund and CT Early Childhood Alliance. For more information call (860) 951-2212, ext. 228.

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