

For Immediate Release:

## United Way Kindergarten Countdown Camps Prepare Pre-K Children for School

*La Porte County* - The United Way of La Porte County is proud to announce the 2023 Kindergarten Countdown Camps in La Porte County have wrapped up another successful year! These 4-week camps help Pre-K students prepare academically and socially for kindergarten. The camps focus on essential success skills and are taught by experienced kindergarten teachers. Literacy test scores of students consistently increase, as does their confidence and enthusiasm for school overall. According to Kris Pate, president and CEO of United Way of La Porte County, "Over 50 children participated in the camps this year throughout La Porte County."



The 25 students in LaPorte Schools who completed the entire 4 weeks of camp, raised their Get Ready to Read assessment scores by an average of 10.7%. Ten, or 40% of the 25 students, increased their scores by 12% or more. Four students increased by 40%, 36%, 36%, and 24% respectively.

Likewise, 28 Michigan City students increased their scores by an average of 16.4%. Twenty, or 71% of the 28 students who completed the entire 4 weeks, increased their scores by 12% or more. One camper accomplished a whopping 40% increase, one achieved a 36% increase, one a 28% increase, and six more achieved a 24% increase. "These are substantial gains!" said Pate.



"Through the years, we have heard so many appreciative comments from Kindergarten teachers who notice how much more prepared Kindergarten Countdown Campers are when school starts", said Pate. "Teachers from this past summer have shared how beneficial it has been for their students to get to practice being in a classroom and work with other students while learning skills needed for Kindergarten. The children were excited to be at school and learn."

Mrs. Iacovetti shared, "I believe that there are many benefits to the Kindergarten Countdown program. Our daily routine and structure help each student prepare for a full school day. Many gains are made by exposing the students to various kindergarten standards (letters, sounds, numbers, shapes etc.) along with socializing among their peers and learning to cooperate/play in small groups and with partners. Many of these students have not ever held a crayon or a pencil so this repeated exposure is beneficial, especially when it comes to writing their own names. I have heard other kindergarten teacher's comment about what a difference it makes when the campers go to kindergarten in the fall." Mrs. Gertner added, "What is most beneficial to our kiddos in the countdown camps is learning the structure and expectations of kindergarten. They gain exposure to what it means to be in a school setting. They are exposed to letters, numbers, and shapes, colors, names, crew, conflict resolution, and much more. I have witnessed the impact it has on kids that attend the program."

According to Mrs. Arndt, “The gains are evident to the kindergarten teachers when school resumes in August. There is an increase in name identification and writing, letter recognition and sounds, counting, pencil grip, procedures-lining up, sitting on the carpet, basic rules and how to go through the cafeteria line (this one is huge!). Most of all, they get to work on their social skills and make friends-many of which they may see in their Kindergarten class. We are also able to assist and provide tips to those who may be experiencing separation anxiety. The Kindergarten Countdown Camp Program is so needed in our community. It allows our young learners to get a better head start on their learning adventures and feel more positive as they begin them, too.”

Julie Zolvinski added, “My class I had many successes that need to be celebrated! One student had never been in a school before. He not only learned to recognize his name in print, but by the end, was saying many of the letters in his name too! Another student gained the understanding of the difference between numbers and letters and was able to identify some letters and sounds by the end of camp. All of my students gained confidence in going through the lunch line, selecting food items, carrying their trays to the table, and cleaning up after themselves. Kindergarten Countdown Camp gave my students the extra boost they needed for the start of the 2023-2024 school year!”



Maria Moryl-Amor shared, “Kindergarten Countdown students successfully worked collaboratively on puzzles while strengthening their understanding of letter names and sounds. Students used homemade play dough as a slate to practice making strokes and writing their name. In addition, students celebrated summer school and practiced their oral language skills while learning to play BINGO. Learning was fun for our students!”

“We consider Kindergarten Countdown Camps to be one of our most vital programs because of the proven link between early childhood learning and life-long adult success,” said Pate. “This summer our camps have been made possible through a generous donation from the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte and through other local gifts and grant awards. We are thankful to all our partners, agencies, teachers, and schools who share our commitment to early childhood education,” added Pate.

To help keep this important educational program in our local school systems, please consider a donation to United Way of La Porte County. Donations can be made online at [unitedwaylpc.org](http://unitedwaylpc.org) or by calling 219-210-3534.

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United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in LaPorte County. United Way of LaPorte County improves the lives of the people of LaPorte County by mobilizing the caring power of our community.

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