



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **United Way Kindergarten Countdown Camps Prepare Pre-K Children for School**

*LaPorte County* - The United Way of LaPorte County is proud to announce the 2021 Kindergarten Countdown Camps in LaPorte County have wrapped up another successful year! These 4 week camps help Pre-K students – many of whom come from financially struggling families – 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. Over 120 children participated in the camps this year throughout LaPorte County.

The 37 students in LaPorte Schools who completed the entire 4 weeks of camp, raised their Get Ready to Read assessment scores by an average of 9.6%. Seventeen, or 46% of the 37 students, increased their scores by 12% or more. Two students increased by 36% and 28% respectively.

Likewise, 137 Michigan City students increased their scores by an average on 7.5%. Twenty-eight, or 39% of the 137 students who completed the entire 4 weeks, increased their scores by 12% or more. One camper accomplished a whopping 40% increase and two more achieved a 36% 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 have been excited to be at school and learn. “The social growth aspect was so exciting to see after the last year of craziness we all went through. I was amazed how, in four weeks, my students learned to follow procedures, take turns, share, help support each other, as well listen and talk about the stories we shared. Their confidence bloomed as they learned to trace, color, and make lines and shapes come together to form letters and people,” commented Shari Wagner. And from Sharon Arndt, “Many of the children did not know how to interact or ask for things in the beginning. By modeling and having them practice, there was great growth in this area. Communication increased, along with friendships. Conversations were taking place in and out of the classroom. Growth was also evident in pencil/crayon grip as you could see more control as the child traced, wrote their name, and colored.” Many other reports of increased social skills included comments about students working together and helping each other clean up messes.

A teacher from LaPorte Schools wrote, “A special thanks goes to the United Way for supporting Kindergarten Countdown Camp. The camp provides much needed structure and guidance for students during the summer months and was especially helpful after the pandemic school year where kids had

fewer interactions. The kids were so happy to have the opportunity and next year's teachers will see a difference both academically and socially as the new school year begins."

"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 Kris Pate, Executive Director of United Way of LaPorte County. "This summer our camps have been made possible through a generous donation from the Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte and through other 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 schools systems, please consider a donation to United Way of LaPorte 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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