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For Immediate Release

YDI helps to plant the developmental seeds in the garden of LENA Grow

Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) is partnering with LENA Grow and the UNM Evaluation Lab to develop a program designed to enhance the high-quality services YDI delivers to infants and toddlers by focusing on language and literacy skills.

"The LENA Grow Project is one of many examples of how the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is supporting their belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive and in building equitable communities." proclaims CEO Robert Chavez, "This project will definitely make a difference in the lives of the children we are serving."

The \$200,000 grant funded by W.K. Kellogg will give YDI the ability to directly impact approximately 288 infants and toddlers, as well as 72 teachers over the course of 2022-2023 year across 36 classrooms spread throughout 12 early care and education centers. The LENA Grow model will be implemented using a vest equipped with a data and voice recorder that is assigned to each child. The teachers will place these vests on each child participant once a week and data will be gathered throughout the day showing how the child is spoken to and interacts with the environment around them. A Coach/Mentor will meet weekly with each teacher to discuss results to enhance language and literacy skills in each child and improve future individualized instruction.

St. Mark's in the Valley Day School and First Fruits Christian Academy will also be two specific community sites chosen to participate amongst the 12 locations. This community interaction, along with YDI's governance body consisting of the Governing Board, Policy Council, and Parent Committees, will monitor and ensure LENA Grow is not only fulfilling YDI's mission of partnering with families, but will also guarantee the program is meeting the needs of the children and creating a positive impact on their future development.

"The LENA Grows project has multiple impacts, from increasing children's language development to building upon teacher listening skills, as well as back and forth conversations and involving parents in activities that are fun!" boasts Debra Baca, YDI's Vice President of Early Childhood Education, "YDI's goal is to implement the LENA project in both Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms. Thank you to the Kellogg Foundation for funding this cutting-edge initiative."

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Youth Development, Inc. (YDI)

Founded in 1971, Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) is a nationally recognized, New Mexico-based, youth and family service organization. We assist with early childhood education and childcare, prenatal care, alternative education, job training and placement, mental and behavioral health services, homeless assistance, mentoring, family development and family counseling services.

About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal innovator and entrepreneur Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life.

The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special attention is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit www.wkkf.org.