

MEDIA RELEASE

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Attention: News Editor

Early childhood program honoured

A Great Southern early childhood program won accolades as an outstanding regional project in the 2012 WA Children's Week Awards recently.

A Smart Start, run by the YMCA with the help of \$660,000 in Royalties for Regions funding over three years through the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC), was honoured by Education Minister Peter Collier and Community Services Minister Robyn McSweeney.

The program won the Department for Communities Regional Services Award.

A Smart Start addresses the needs of children up to four years old, with a special focus on disadvantaged families in regional and remote areas.

Families gain connections to community networks and support groups, and develop skills to encourage learning within the home.

Smart Start program coordinators Tracey Wilson and Sue Thompson received the award on behalf of the YMCA and the program.

Mrs McSweeney said Smart Start had made a vast difference to the lives of children in the Great Southern by connecting families to services.

YMCA Smart Start manager Marilyn Lottering said the award recognised the hard work that had gone into ensuring families continued to receive the support needed to raise happy, healthy children.

"We are dedicated to assisting parents to feel more confident in their role as their child's first educator," Ms Lottering said.

"This includes organising community events and the provision of a parenting resource manual with updated developmental milestones at six, 12 and 18 months, and each year up to four years."

GSDC Board Chairman Peter Rundle said the program helped to build stronger families.

"Giving children a strong and healthy start in life helps them to make the most of educational opportunities at school," Mr Rundle said.



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“I congratulate the Smart Start program coordinators, community partners and volunteers for their achievement in enhancing the lives of young children in the Great Southern.

“It is fitting that their dedication and hard work has been acknowledged as outstanding at a State level,” Mr Rundle said.

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