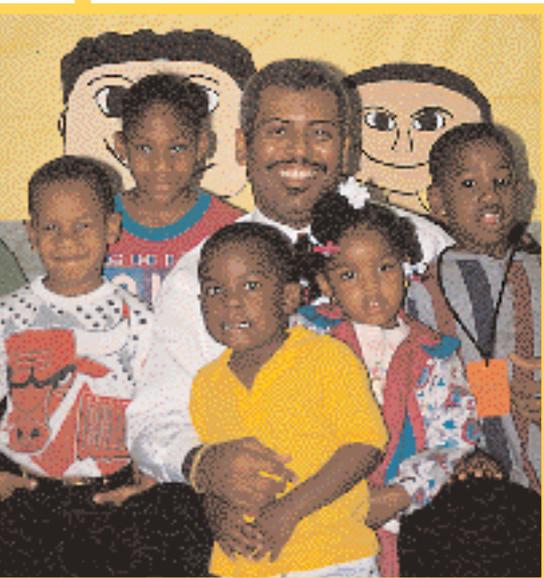


## Meet Cover Director Dwayne A. Crompton KCMC Child Development Corporation, Kansas City, Missouri



“As an early education and care community, we are going to have to come together as one to ensure that quality early education is available to all,” says Dwayne A. Crompton, executive director of KCMC Child Development Corporation, in Kansas City, Missouri.

A not-for-profit agency, KCMC (an anagram for Karing for Children is our Main Concern) Child Development Corporation has been providing innovative answers to that question for 25 years since its founding in 1970 under the old Model Cities program.

Dwayne, a former sixth grade teacher, came to KCMC 18 years ago when Kansas City Model Cities Program was looking for someone to start up a child care program for inner-city families. The Kansas City School District loaned Dwayne to the poverty agency. After Dwayne had completed the job and returned to the

school district, the Model Cities child care director resigned and the program offered Dwayne the job.

Dwayne readily accepted. He had decided early on that the preschool years offered the best opportunity to have the greatest impact on children. Dwayne had switched several years earlier to the preschool classroom and, after two years of working with preschoolers and their parents, he was hooked. “I could see the difference,” Dwayne recalls. “I felt that if we could engage parents as active partners early on, then they would continue in that role.”

KCMC grew rapidly during its first five years, opening child care centers and enrolling family child care homes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program throughout the inner city. That growth came to a standstill in 1975 when Model Cities was discontinued and KCMC was forced to cut back services.

Responding to the changing political winds, KCMC broadened its mission to embrace all of Kansas City and outlying communities. KCMC became a multi-faceted child development agency, administering Head Start, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and operating two comprehensive child development centers. Advocacy also became a hallmark of the agency.

KCMC won the federal contract to administer the Kansas City Head Start Project in 1979 when the program was jeopardized by the dismantling of the grantee agency. Under KCMC, Kansas City Head Start grew into a national model of excellence.

Kansas City’s Head Start, which includes programs operated by the Kansas City and Independence, Missouri, school districts, serves 1,786 three and four year olds and their families in the center program and 72 families in the home-based program. Kansas City’s Head Start is recognized as a national model of excellence.

Dwayne believes that improving access to quality early care and education and ending welfare dependency are concerns of the '90s. “Head Start can help,” he says, “but Head Start has to broaden its scope — its constituency — to embrace the community at large like it has never done before so it doesn’t appear to be an isolated service.”

Under KCMC, Kansas City Head Start said “no” to isolation. The program has been highly visible in the community. It has also been a leader in reaching out to form partnerships to expand quality child care to needy families and children.

The results have been a bonanza of innovative Head Start partnerships with the private sector and other governmental agencies in Kansas City.

In 1990, building on Head Start’s half-day format, KCMC launched the New Start Child Care Partnership Initiative which provides full-day, year-round child care and family development services to Head Start eligible preschoolers and their families. Because economic self-reliance is the goal of New Start, parents must be enrolled in school, college, or job training to participate.

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New Start blends public and private funding streams to expand services to needy families. “It shouldn’t matter how a family receives funding,” Dwayne explains. “What should matter is that the child and family are getting what they need to enhance their lives and become productive.”

A key component of New Start is the family advocate who strives to ensure a positive child rearing environment in the home by working to strengthen the ability of the parent or guardian to function as the head of household.

In 1993, encouraged by the success of New Start, KCMC launched Full Start, a Head Start Community Partnership Program that now operates at three centers. Full Start, a collaborative child care funding arrangement, allows neighborhood child care centers to leverage Head Start dollars to provide the full range of Head Start services that previously were available only to children enrolled in Head Start centers.

Full Start services include a full-time family advocate; technical assistance and training by KCMC’s education, health, and social service specialists; medical and dental health services; parental involvement; and education and training programs.

“Because of our New Start and Full Start partnerships, we can offer something more than just custodial care for children whose parents are trying to get off welfare,” Dwayne explains. “Everyone knows you must have child care available if mothers are going to work or go to school, but we must also offer programs that help children grow and develop.”

New Start and Full Start were developed by KCMC’s Planning and

Development/Technical Assistance Division. This division offers child care consulting services to businesses, educational institutions, school districts, and governmental agencies.

Many companies now look to KCMC for help in meeting the child care needs of their employees. Clients have included Hallmark Cards, Inc.; Penn Valley Community College; Allied MBE Companies, Inc.; City of Kansas City, Missouri; Lee’s Summit School District; and Swope Parkway Health Center.

Despite its reputation for excellence in center-based child care, KCMC has also built a strong record in home child care. In 1974, KCMC established Kansas City’s first Child and Adult Care Food Program and became a leader in the movement to improve and professionalize home child care.

In 1985, KCMC’s Child and Adult Care Food Program presented the city’s first Family Child Care Conference. About 60 family child care providers attended the first conference. Last year, more than 400 providers, child care workers, and other child care professionals attended.

In the 18 years that Dwayne has been executive director, KCMC has grown from a fledgling anti-poverty child care program to a nationally recognized leader in its field. Last November, the Children’s Defense Fund saluted KCMC as one of the most successful agencies of its type in the country. Six other agencies were also honored.

Last year, KCMC celebrated three important anniversaries: the 25th anniversary of its founding, the 30th anniversary of Head Start, and the 10th anniversary of the Family

Child Care Conference. But it was not a year dedicated to reveling in the past.

Last October, KCMC, with an eye on the future, began construction on a \$3.7 million, state-of-the-art child and family center. The 27,000 square foot facility will be large enough to provide child care for 200 children — infants up to age 12.

The center will provide holistic child care services to low- and moderate-income families headed by parents who are employed, in school, or enrolled in job training. “Building economically self-reliant families is the goal of our new child and family center,” Dwayne says.

The new facility is also a symbol of the strong community support KCMC enjoys in Kansas City. \$1.2 million of the building’s cost came from federal and city government. The remainder, over \$2.5 million, was raised in the private sector — businesses, foundations, and individuals.

Rallying the community to build the new KCMC facility is all part of Dwayne’s vision. “I want to make sure that this organization becomes so ingrained in the life of the community that the community recognizes its importance and won’t ever let it die. Although we are a non-profit agency, we have an entrepreneurial spirit,” Dwayne continues. “I want the community to think about how it does business and to recognize that child care is everyone’s concern.”