

## Parents in Rural Pennsylvania Prepare Their Daughter For Academic Success

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After their first year in the Parent-Child Home Program, Cherokee Bruno and her mother, Debra, were already wondering what they would do without the Program when Cherokee graduated. They participated in the Lycoming-Clinton, PA Parent-Child Home Program site, sponsored by the Lycoming-Clinton Counties Commission for Community Action, Inc. With six children to raise, it was clear why Debra enjoyed the quiet, special learning time that she was able to spend with her youngest daughter and their Home Visitor, Ann Nicotera. Coty, Cherokee's older brother, also frequently participated in the sessions when he got home from kindergarten. Debra learned of The Parent-Child Home Program from Coty's Head Start teacher and immediately thought that it would be a good program to do with Cherokee because she wanted to ensure that her daughter had the necessary skills to be successful in kindergarten. Debra wished that she had participated in the Program with all of her children because she began seeing a remarkable difference in 3-year-old Cherokee right away. Her daughter not only developed a great fondness for books, but also began showing a strong interest in writing. "She tries to print letters," reported a proud Debra after Cherokee's first Program year.

With a large family and limited annual income, Debra and her husband, Timothy, were not able to fit as many books and toys as they would have liked into their family budget. They particularly appreciated the new, developmentally-appropriate books and toys provided by The Parent-Child Home Program, which all of their younger children were able to enjoy as well. Of all of the books and toys Cherokee was introduced to in her first year of the Program, she was most excited by her first book, *Where is Baby's Belly Button?* Cherokee loved the new book so much, that she slept with it for two nights and would spontaneously begin "reading" it to her father, siblings, or family visitors. Cherokee was also enchanted by the "Little People Home Sweet Home" doll house which allowed her to role-play by pretending that each figure was a member of her family. This type of play provided her extended opportunities to use more complex language and express her thoughts and feelings. Cherokee's Home Visitor also incorporated a music and movement activity into each visit to motivate Cherokee. Through music, Cherokee quickly learned the words and movements for such active games as: "Round and Round," "Red Squirrel," and "This is the Way We Rake the Leaves."



Seeing the remarkable changes in Cherokee and her budding love for learning, Debra recommended the Program to her family and friends. "I told them that this program is the best thing. It teaches children to be independent and helps with their language skills." She added that her daughter had already learned colors, shapes, numbers, and nearly doubled her vocabulary in just one year in the Program. Debra also notes that she learned a great deal herself. "I learned so much from Ann on how to handle some of Coty's inappropriate behaviors. The way she modeled interacting with Cherokee was a learning experience for me as a parent," she explained.

Based on their experience, the family insisted that The Parent-Child Home Program should be available to every Pennsylvania toddler who would benefit from it.