

**PNC Financial Services Group, Pennsylvania**  
**Jim Rohr, Eva Blum, Connie Bond Stuart, Peter Danchak, Mike Harreld**

The PNC Financial Services Group (PNC) is one of a kind: An expanding regional financial services group that in 2004 harnessed its collective power to move an issue of major importance to its employees and to the communities it serves. To the good fortune of early childhood education, it chose school readiness as its focus and created Grow Up Great, a \$100 million program over ten years which consists of grants and employee volunteerism to help prepare children from birth to five for success in school and life. PNC established an advisory council of early childhood experts to guide its efforts and the initiative has partnerships with Family Communications, Inc., producers of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood; Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit education organization behind Sesame Street; and Head Start.

A comprehensive, bi-lingual corporate-based school readiness program, with a focus on underserved children, PNC Grow Up Great and PNC Crezca con Exito, were launched in 2004 with four key components: grants, employee volunteerism, advocacy and awareness. Given its comprehensive focus and recognition that early education needed to be elevated as a public priority, advocacy was identified as a central program component from the program's inception. PNC's advocacy activities and those of its executives frequently are directed toward advancing pre-k in the states where its services are provided, as well as nationally. As evidenced by the individuals profiled in this publication, PNC executives are speaking and acting on behalf of children's school readiness in a myriad of ways.

PNC Grow Up Great

Grants are made to Head Start and other organizations that support early childhood education. These grants often support demonstration projects that develop and test new curriculum and teaching practices in math, creative arts and science. Most recently, PNC Grow Up Great announced its collaboration with 14 science centers to promote preschoolers' knowledge of science. These projects consistently include a measurement component to promote and document effectiveness.

PNC is especially proud of the employee volunteerism component. As part of its corporate volunteerism policy, PNC offers eligible employees up to 40 paid hours a year to volunteer at early childhood education centers – and 40% of PNC's employees have seized the opportunity, providing a total of 133,000 volunteer hours as of the end of 2009. Additionally, The Grants for Great Hours Program awards \$1,000 to \$3,000 to early childhood organizations where employees or a group of employees have volunteered a set amount of hours; \$192,000 has been awarded so far.

PNC leverages its influence with the corporate community, policymakers and other key influencers to elevate public/private discussions about the importance of early childhood education. Its advocacy extends from opinion-editorials to state legislatures to Congress. Speaking on behalf of children's school readiness, PNC executives advocate for stronger quality standards, improved access to quality programs, especially for low income children, and encourage other corporations to get involved in early education. Several of its executives sit on the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission and PNC provided funding to The Pew Charitable Trusts to help launch the first-ever summit of the nation's top economists to explore the economic impact of investments in early education.

PNC Grow Up Great has an ongoing awareness campaign to communicate the importance of school readiness. Through TV, radio, print and online advertising, these efforts have garnered more than one billion media impressions since the program's inception. Together, they highlight various program initiatives and the benefits of quality early childhood education. The campaign's main component is the Happy, Healthy, Ready for School Kit developed by Sesame Workshop. More than 500,000 kits have been distributed to provide helpful tips and fun activities for children and families to turn everyday moments into learning opportunities. The kit is bilingual and is available for free in all of PNC's branches.

Not surprisingly, PNC has received accolades for its efforts. Among them, the US Chamber of Commerce named PNC as a finalist for the Corporate Stewardship Award in 2006, and the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy awarded them the 2007 Excellence in Corporate Philanthropy Award.

PNC has always been a philanthropic company. Each PNC market had a budget and within broad guidelines, regional offices made grants based on assessment of their community's needs. *PNC Grow Up Great* began about six years ago with a question posed by James E. Rohr, chairman and chief executive officer of The PNC Financial Services Group: "We looked at our business... The better our communities do, the better we do as a

bank. What would happen if we harnessed the power of PNC by focusing on one issue -- a cause -- of major importance in the communities we serve?"

According to Eva Blum, director of community affairs for PNC Bank and president of the PNC Foundation, from the beginning PNC wanted the answer to James Rohr's question to be different from traditional corporate programs -- in fact the mandate from Rohr was to be non-traditional. Those working on the program's design wanted it to be comprehensive and to involve the entire company. They wanted it to address a cutting edge issue that was meaningful to PNC employees and to the communities PNC serves. As the research progressed, and PNC employees identified children and education as a priority interest, the investigators 'found' early childhood education and realized that "we as a country had missed the boat." PNC's 10-year commitment to early childhood education evidences not only a desire to make a difference but also a willingness to take a long-term view on an issue of great importance to the communities it serves.

Rohr speaks widely on behalf of early childhood education, including with business leaders and members of Congress. Along with Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell, he serves as the honorary chair of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission, a gubernatorial-appointed group of business leaders created in 2008 and charged with increasing support for public investments in early learning. "You just have to keep talking about it for them to embrace it," he says.

Joining Rohr is a dynamic team of PNC regional presidents. Northeast Pennsylvania Regional President Peter Danchak's reasons for becoming actively involved as an advocate for early childhood education combine personal and professional commitments. He was appointed by Governor Rendell to serve as co-chair (with Phillip A. Peterson, Senior Vice President of Aon Consulting) of the Early Learning Investment Commission. With four other commissioners, Rohr attended a three-day symposium on the early brain research at Harvard University's Center for the Developing Child, and cited that experience as a major influence on his work. "As a business person, I'm concerned today because we spend too much time and money remediating new employees. I'm impressed by the research that shows children who participate in high quality early childhood programs, will require less training and will have skills to thrive in competitive environments, especially given that in other countries investment in human capital is the norm rather than the exception. The children of today are the workforce of tomorrow, and unless we support them with early childhood education, the future workforce will not be of the size and ability to meet the needs of a global economy. Further, today's children are not just tomorrow's employees; they also will be the adult citizens of our communities."

The Commission encourages its member business leaders -- most of whom are CEOs or direct reports to the CEO -- to engage directly with their legislators about the importance of early childhood education, bring more business executives into the advocacy campaign, and write opinion pieces for their local newspapers. Membership includes close to 50 business leaders from across the state, as well as representatives from the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business & Industry, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Central Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association and the United Way of Pennsylvania. Danchak and Phil Peterson speak regularly to strategize and plan the activities of the Commission, including organizing meetings with up to 150 business and civic leaders to local community groups such as Chambers of Commerce, human resource professionals, Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs to educate them about the connection between early learning and economic development. Commission members reach out to policymakers throughout the year to discuss the importance of investing in early care and education by phone and by e-mail, as well as face-to-face meetings with legislators when they are in session. The Early Learning Investment Commission has also spawned new regional startup initiatives in areas throughout the Commonwealth in partnership with local professional and not-for-profit organizations for the purpose of mobilizing business around investment in early learning in neighboring communities.

The impact is evident: The backing of Pennsylvania’s business community led to the successful passage of the Pennsylvania Pre-k Counts program, increased funding in 2008 and holding the line despite a desperate budget situation in 2009. “So many other important things are happening in today’s world,” Danchak stresses. “Early childhood education could be left behind if not constantly brought to the forefront.”

Delaware Regional President Connie Bond Stuart’s leadership is driving the pre-k component of Vision 2015, a pre-k to 12 private-public sector collaboration to establish a world class public education system in Delaware. The effort is backed by Governor Jack Markell, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and Delaware Business Roundtable, and this year PNC earmarked a \$100,000 contribution for its deliberations on pre-k. Stuart, along with Lieutenant Governor Matt Dean, chairs a newly convened 21-member strategic planning committee charged with recommending to the governor an actionable state plan for pre-k that describes what the early childhood system should look like and what needs to happen to achieve that vision.

Based on this experience, Stuart’s guidance to early childhood advocates is to tap into business leaders who are interested in K-12 education and help them understand the importance of beginning children’s education sooner. Pre-k had not originally been apart of Vision 2015, but once PNC brought forward the research on the relationship between early learning and educational success, the commission realized it had to be included.

Stuart’s multiple leadership roles in the state, such as chairman of the Rodel Foundation and United Way of Delaware, and Vice-Chairman of the State Chamber of Commerce, offer many perches for expanding public awareness of pre-k’s importance. She asserts, “If you feel strongly about something, you have to work hard to make it happen.” She feels the stars are aligned in Delaware to create a strong public school system that includes high quality pre-k and says she plans to do whatever she can to make that happen.

Greater Washington, D.C. Area President Mike Harreld’s influence on pre-k, extending from Washington, D.C. into Virginia, is part of his 40-year civic commitment to public education. He attributes this in part to the fact that his own education, from kindergarten through college, was through the public education system and now is only reinforced by PNC’s philanthropic interest in early childhood education.

Harreld’s public service includes positions on the boards of five universities, where he learned how much remediation occurred at the freshman level. This prompted him to become involved with the Kentucky school board at the time of education reform in the state, which, in turn, led him down what he calls “the reverse daisy chain. High schools blamed middle schools and on downward, each criticizing the other for failing to adequately prepare students for the next level. Finally, we got down to the primary grade level, and I discovered its importance in terms of keeping children on grade level. This led me to get involved with pre-k and enlightened child care that focused on educational attainment. I realized that we were sub-optimizing children by not preparing them to be successful when they enter kindergarten. That was almost seven years ago, and now pre-k is becoming a wave.”

In Virginia and Washington, D.C., Harreld has become recognized as an eloquent speaker on behalf of pre-k. The National Governors Association also has benefited from the passion and clarity of his message. Harreld presented before the group’s February 2007 conference in Washington as part of the Education, Early Childhood & Workforce Committee Session. Virginia gained from his service on Governor Tom Kaine’s task force exploring universal pre-k, which ultimately led to new legislation and pre-k expansion backed by the Governor and General Assembly.

The primary obstacle to change,” Harreld notes, “is inertia, getting business leaders and others to understand that early education is an issue worthy of their attention and consideration.” He identifies as one of his primary contributions expanding and deepening the dialogue about pre-k, “reminding, nudging, nurturing and supporting people’s efforts.”