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# Pence: Parents need support to raise children



First Lady Karen Pence with Charlie Kaper looking at sign on side of Cedar Lake Florist for Bicentennial project (Kitty Conley / Crown Point Star)

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**A**s Parenting Awareness Month kicks off in Indiana, First Lady Karen Pence spoke of the importance of raising children to be responsible citizens as well as supporting parents through the sometimes rough waters of parenthood Friday in Gary.

The First Lady's Charitable Foundation has funded several Indiana Parenting Institute programs, in particular the Responsible Parenting Campaign. It sponsors events on topics such as teen pregnancy prevention, truancy prevention, and substance abuse prevention.

"(It's) shaping and training a new generation of citizens by not only calling for the need for effective parenting education, but (looking at) what each of us can do individually and collectively to protect ... these children," Pence said.

She lauded Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson for applying for grants to help the city's children.

Pence highlighted her own struggles as a parent of three children, who are now adults.

"Parenting is not easy," Pence said. "When they hit those teenage years, I struggled."

Pence said a helping hand can really make a difference for parents — from churches to schools to neighbors.

"When it comes to our children and the future of our society, we are all in this together," Pence said. "We want to celebrate the people who are raising our state's most valuable resource — our children."

IPI offers a variety of services including parenting classes, support groups, and life coaches as well as support services for caregivers who need assistance with employment, child care, education, healthcare, after-school programs, or finances.

James Muhammad, CEO of Lakeshore Public TV, described the group as "your best neighbor encapsulated into a social services agency."

Gary Community School Corp. Superintendent Cheryl Pruitt shared her personal experience of raising two young children as a single parent.

"What do you do when you have two little children who you have to raise?" Pruitt said. "I know that some of our parents might be in that situation. I went back to school. My church, community, and friends — we supported one another in those situations."

"I worked at night, and some of the mothers from the church watched my kids."

Pruitt said it's important to reach out to people who might not have family or friends to assist them.

"It takes a village to make sure that we provide for the children. But we also need to make certain that our parents are healthy," Pruitt said. "Do what you need to do to rise again. Make certain that parents have a support system."

Parental involvement can play a key role in a child's future success, Pruitt said.

"The most accurate predictor of student achievement?" Pruitt said. "It's not their ZIP Code; it's not their economics; it's the support they have from their parents."

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Learn more:

For more information:

Indiana Parenting Institute

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