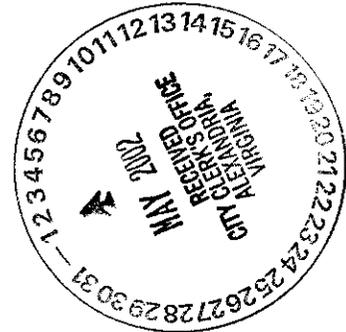


SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

April 29, 2002

*Budget WS
4-29-02*



The Honorable Kerry Donley and Members of City Council
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor *Kerry* Donley and Members of Council,

Before your work session on the budget this evening, I want to give you some additional information concerning City funding for the Campagna Kids school-age child care program.

I understand that the City Manager is recommending no increase for FY03 because the funding was significantly increased in FY02. While this is true, all parties agree that the resources available – including parent fees, Child Care Block Grant funds and donations – bring us nowhere near the comparable salaries for child care workers in the region, and for a number of staff we are unable to pay the wages required by the City’s own Living Wage Ordinance. The discrepancy between Campagna Kids wages and those of the City’s Recreation Department is especially troubling since Campagna Kids and the Rec Department operate programs at the same hours, for the same age group, and often in the same buildings. The difference in staff wages and benefits is readily apparent, and creates a powerful disincentive to attracting and retaining quality staff in Campagna Kids.

Despite this funding disparity, Campagna Kids now has achieved two sites accredited by the National School-Age Care Alliance with two more pending this spring, and offers more than 12 enrichment activities, all linked to the state Standards of Learning. Furthermore, we have created a successful model program at Samuel Tucker Elementary School, and that site is preparing to apply for accreditation as well.

As you know, the lack of even a cost-of-living adjustment will mean almost a 3% loss in spending capacity for the program next year. In addition to the need for increased wages, we have been told to expect up to 20% increases in both health and liability insurance next year. Without an increase in City funding, these additional costs would necessitate a reduction in spending on other aspects of the program that directly impact children, such as supplies and food.

The City portion of the FY02 budget is approximately \$1,100,000. A 3% cost-of-living adjustment, the bare minimum needed to maintain this year’s spending capacity, is \$33,000. It

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would take \$300,000 more to raise Campagna Kids staff to a level equal to other child care programs, and even then the wages and benefits would not match those of the Recreation Department.

We also had hoped to consider establishment of an after-school program at a West End apartment complex to serve those families who lack the transportation to pick their children up at school at the end of the day. The cost for this program would be approximately \$200,000. All these funding needs have been regularly reviewed with the Department of Human Services since last fall, which is why we were so dismayed to be told on April 5 that there was no increase in the City Manager's budget.

On behalf of the 1,367 children and families served by Campagna Kids, we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Katherine L. Morrison
Executive Director

cc: Philip Sunderland, City Manager