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MEDIA CONTACT:

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Forty Carrots Family Center Dedicates Two Playgrounds

New Equipment and Design Enhance Outdoor Classrooms

What: Dedication and media demonstration of Forty Carrots Family Center's two newly renovated playgrounds – engaging outdoor classrooms specially designed to spark children's creativity and promote learning through play. Funded by the **Dart Foundation** and **Steinwachs Family Foundation**, the playgrounds at Forty Carrots Family Center's Kane Campus on Tuttle Avenue are an integral part of the learning environment that has helped the Preschool at Forty Carrots earn the prestigious NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accreditation currently held by only three preschools in Sarasota. NAEYC's national, voluntary accreditation system has set professional standards for early childhood education programs, and helped families identify high quality programs for their young children.

When: 9:30 – 10:00a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2012 – A special **Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Musical Performance** honoring the Dart Foundation and the Steinwachs Family Foundation will be held at 9:30 a.m.

Where: Forty Carrots Family Center, 1500 S. Tuttle Ave., Sarasota

RSVP: Due to space constraints and security of our students, this is an invitation-only event. Media representatives who wish to attend should RSVP to Margaret at Forty Carrots Family Center at (941) 365-7716 ext. 301 or margaret@fortycarrots.com

Information: Studies have documented the importance of outdoor play on social, physical, cognitive and behavior development, with evidence supporting benefits such as improved recall of information, creative problem solving, and increased language, literacy, creativity and motor skills among children. Outdoor classrooms support

whole-child learning because children are able to develop skills and understanding in many areas at the same time as they explore the world around them. For more information, see accompanying fact sheet.

About Forty Carrots: Forty Carrots Family Center is a nonprofit organization that helps families from North Port to Manatee County. For 19 years, Forty Carrots has been this community's only agency whose singular focus is early childhood and parenting education. The agency offers a NAEYC accredited, 5+-star preschool at its Kane Campus as well as a variety of classes for parents to attend alone or with young children at its center or throughout the community. Forty Carrots classes are specifically designed for families with children age birth to five. Through its unique blend of early childhood and parenting education, Forty Carrots Family Center provides parents and professionals with information, skills and support.

FACT SHEET

Forty Carrots considered NAEYC's high standards, Ellen Galinsky's Mind in the Making, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and the "No Child Left Inside" movement championed by Richard Louv in "No More Nature-Deficit Disorder" when creating this playground. "Many of us believe that the child-nature connection and environmental literacy should be considered as fundamental elements of children's cognitive development, as well as their psychological and physical health" (Louv 2009).

Ellen Galinsky points out that intersections (like Ts, Ls and Xs) in the shape of letters occur at the same rate in natural scenes as they do in written language. Exposing children to natural materials such as twigs and logs is a great way to help children think about the alphabet.

The use of natural materials such as sand, water and plant life nurtures children's "naturalistic intelligence" according to Gardner (1999). Natural materials allow for a multitude of fine and gross motor skills as well as lending themselves easily to dramatic play. Plants, leaves, even seeds become treasures that children transform into other objects allowing for creativity to evolve.

Earlier this week, on the first day back from vacation, a Forty Carrots preschooler sat on a swing, trying to get it going. Cheryl Evans, Forty Carrots preschool director, approached her and asked if she needed a little push. The girl responded with, "Yes, I need to give my leaves air". She wanted the long pine needles in her hand to blow in the air. "What a wonderful learning experience," Evans said. "This is what makes this playground so special for our children. We are thrilled with our new vibrant outdoor play and learning environment. There are hands-on opportunities for learning everything from biology to ecology to nutrition! The new outdoor classrooms will be of real benefit to families enrolled in both our preschool and parenting education classes now and for many years to come."

Save the Date: Ellen Galinsky, author of Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs, will be the featured presenter at Forty Carrots 10th Annual Free Community Speaker Event on September 24, 2012

Forty Carrots Family Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening families through educational programs for parents, children and professionals in the field.

www.fortycarrots.org