

## Empowering Parents to Create Change



Creating a space where parents are heard, supported, and empowered can spark change far beyond a single event. That belief is central to the Early Childhood Resource Center’s Parent Café model, and it came to life during a recent Gather & Grow Parent Café held in Ravenna, in partnership with the Portage Learning Center’s Head Start program.

Parent Cafés are welcoming, peer-led gatherings that provide a safe space for families to share experiences, engage in meaningful conversation, and learn from one another. Funded by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, these Cafés reflect our commitment to strengthening families by elevating parent voices and fostering community-led solutions.

For parents Jazmaine and Mark, the experience was both affirming and motivating.

“These spaces are important as they remind parents that we are not alone and give us a chance to connect, share, and support one another,” Jazmaine shared. “My husband and I loved the experience so much that it inspired us to start a parent support group at our son’s school through the Head Start program. Your encouragement and the sense of community you created played a big part in motivating us to take this step.”

Seeing parents bring the lessons from Parent Cafés back into their communities is a meaningful part of our work, according to George Beatty, Parent Youth Ambassador for Portage County.

“Knowing that the child is the center of everything we do makes me proud to be part of something as meaningful as breaking bread and sharing stories with other parents,” George said. “Many parents and caregivers face life’s challenges alone. Building a new village of parents and caregivers is how we continue our important work in the community.”

Our approach to supporting families is rooted in the belief that leadership begins with being heard.

“Leadership doesn’t always come from titles or formal roles, but from how parents see themselves after being supported,” George said. “What stood out wasn’t just what happened at the Café, but how parents interpreted the experience by seeing themselves as confident enough to apply what they learned within their own school and community. That shift is powerful.”

By creating spaces where parents recognize the value of their voices and their ability to influence change, Parent Cafés help families build stronger connections and healthier futures. To learn more about how we support families, visit our website and click on the Family & Resources tab at

<https://www.ecresourcecenter.org/>