



Princeton Area Community Foundation
FUND for **WOMEN** and **GIRLS**

Thriving Women, Thriving Communities

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty through Early Investment in our Children

May 5, 2017

*We live in a society preoccupied with college and career success. But did you know that the most important time in life are the years from birth to five? The first years of a child's life form the foundation on which future health, emotional development, achievement, and economic security are built. Think about this: high quality early childhood programs can deliver a "13% per child, per year return on investment through better outcomes in education, health, social behavior, and employment."**

*Early investments reduce overall taxpayer costs and produce a competent and competitive future workforce. Given this high return on early childhood programs, shouldn't we aggressively invest in our youngest children rather than leave them to life chances and luck? In 2016, 17 percent of children were living below the poverty line in Mercer County.** The investment we make in our children, especially those born into poverty, is crucial to the future well-being of our entire community. Join us and learn about the impact of today's choices on all of our futures.*

Keynote speaker **Dr. Jacqueline Jones**, President and CEO of the Foundation for Child Development, will discuss the crucial importance of early childhood on the social, emotional, and economic well-being of women and girls. She will share an overview of current U.S. early childhood education policy in national, state and local contexts.

Following her remarks, Dr. Jones will be joined by moderator **Ingrid Reed**, the retired Director of the New Jersey Project at the Eagleton Center at Rutgers University, early childhood educator **Ana Berdecia** of Thomas Edison State University, and **Sarah Steward**, Chief Operating Officer of Homefront (a 2017 grantee-partner of the ***Fund for Women and Girls***) for an interactive discussion of how national and state policies affect local practices. New Jersey has a nationally acclaimed public pre-school program, but what options do women have for care of infants and toddlers? What are the current realities and major challenges facing New Jersey mothers regarding access to high-quality, affordable childcare? What is the potential for integrated institutional services that focus on the emotional, social and developmental needs of children in the crucial first years of life?

* James J. Heckman, et. al., *The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program*, HCEO Working Paper Series, 2016

** NJ Kids Count 2016, Advocates for Children of NJ