



## Champions for CHILDREN

In memory of their infant son, John and Patty Reilly are committed to ensuring safe child care settings and provider training

BY MICHELE J. BARRETT

IN 1989, A TRAGIC FIRE AT A LICENSED CHILD CARE facility in California claimed the life of 13-month-old John David "Jack" Reilly IV, the only child of John D. Reilly III '69, G'70 and his wife, Patricia M. Reilly. For more than two decades since then, the Reillys have championed safe child care settings and ongoing educational opportunities for child care providers. Nationally, they've testified on child care licensing issues and advocated to childproof cigarette lighters. In their home state of California, they produced an educational video to help parents select child care, which has evolved into a no-cost, widely distributed multilingual CD, curriculum guide, and checklist. Their local advocacy with the Huntington Beach Fire Department and other partners helped provide, install, and repair smoke detectors and train child care providers and the elderly on their use. "You have to reach out to others and teach them, help them," John Reilly says. "Teaching families about selecting child care and training current and future providers are important to us."

Continuing their unwavering commitment to children, the Reillys have pledged a \$3.5 million naming gift to the College of Human Ecology toward construction of the Jack Reilly Learning Campus for Child Care Excellence, which will provide a high-quality care and learning environment for more children, from newborns to 5-year-olds, and allow SU

to expand training and research to establish best practices and national standards in early childhood education for students, educators, and providers. "We knew we wanted to do something in Jack's name, to continue his memory, to keep him alive," Patty Reilly says. "We wanted to be sure no other parents or families had to experience this kind of preventable loss, so we decided to partner with Syracuse University."

The center, to be located on South Campus, will physically and programmatically connect the Bernice M. Wright (BMW) Child Development Laboratory School and the Early Education and Child Care Center, both operated within the College of Human Ecology. The new center is expected to total more than 36,000 square feet when combined with the two existing facilities. School of Architecture faculty members Anne Munly and Ted Brown, of Syracuse-based Munly Brown Studio, are the project's lead design consultants, working collaboratively with the University's Office of Campus Planning, Design, and Construction. "The Reillys' incredible generosity will increase capacity to meet the child care needs of SU families and the community," Chancellor Nancy Cantor says. "It also will give us an extraordinary opportunity to build on our longstanding, interdisciplinary strengths and connect them powerfully to professional practice. Perhaps even more powerful is the example that

John and Patty, themselves, set for us all by showing vividly how we can channel our passion to make a sustained, positive impact on the world.”

The Reillys’ commitment to early childhood education and child care safety has been prominent and purposeful at SU, including support for the Quality Infant/Toddler Caregiving Workshop; the Jack Reilly Institute for Early Childhood and Provider Education, a national center of excellence in child care studies research and best practices; and the annual Jack Reilly Distinguished Lecture Series, which brings international child development experts together with students and caregivers. They also created the Jack Reilly Professorship, held by Jaipaul L. Roopnarine, a senior faculty member in the Department of Child and Family Studies, to provide vision, strategic leadership, and develop curriculum for

the institute, which Roopnarine directs. In addition to developing child care safety education programs, an institute priority is to establish an inclusive education program for infants, which would be one of the first in the nation to accommodate children with disabilities and special needs in this age group. Currently, inclusive education programming is available on campus for toddlers and preschool children at the BMW laboratory school. “We are honored to partner with the College of Human Ecology in developing a world-renowned learning institute, where the Syracuse community, international and domestic students and parents, educators, and providers can observe and collaborate, practice and learn, and then return to their homes and entities with a cutting-edge experience in teaching methods and research in infant and child care studies,” the Reillys say. ◀◀

**FROM FEDERAL HEAD START OF THE GREAT SOCIETY** years of the 1960s and developmentally appropriate early childhood education practices to inclusive education, the College of Human Ecology and its forerunners, and the School of Education have been at the forefront of progressive development and inclusion of all children in education at the earliest stages of development.

The Syracuse University Nursery School was established in 1950 in the College of Home Economics, and was renamed the Bernice M. Wright (BMW) Cooperative Nursery School in 1973 in honor of Bernice Meredith Wright, dean of the College for Human Development from 1964 to 1973. Today, it’s known as the BMW Child Development Laboratory School.

Bettye Caldwell, professor emerita of child and family studies, was an early architect of Head Start, developing it at the Children’s Center in Syracuse as one of the first national models of preschool enrichment programs in the 1960s. She collaborated at the center and later at SU with Alice Honig, professor emerita of child and family studies, who continues a 40-year teaching career that includes the annual Quality Infant/Toddler Caregiving Workshop, now in its 35th year.

The University’s pioneering national leadership in early childhood programs, complemented by Honig’s international portfolio and reputation, led the Reillys to Syracuse University. In meeting with Diane Lyden Murphy ’67, G’76, G’78, G’83, dean of the College of Human Ecology, the Reillys learned of the important role she has played for more than three decades related to campus child care. As a graduate assistant in the School of Social Work, Murphy worked under the direction of Professor Charles V. Willie G’57, H’92, who served as vice president of student affairs from 1972 to 1974. Known as a compassionate gentleman, Willie was a true champion of meeting the needs of all students, so it came as no surprise that he made child care at SU a priority. As an activist in the feminist movement on campus and a new mother of twins who often accompanied her



## A RICH HISTORY IN CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

to campus, Murphy was well suited to partner with Willie in making the vision of campus child care a reality. Appointed as married student coordinator, Murphy, along with volunteers, cared for children in a small space in Hendricks Chapel while the child care proposal evolved. “There were amazing faculty at that time, such as Bettye Caldwell, Alice Honig, Ron Lally, Ruth Wynn, and Bernice M. Wright, who were not only responsible for educating students, but also conducting groundbreaking research in their fields of expertise,” Murphy recalls. “What emerged was a model center in the College for Human Development that offered quality child care for the SU campus. It still does today, thanks to the committed leadership and dedicated staff at our child care facilities.”

Daria Webber ’84, G’89, director of the BMW lab school, began her association with BMW as a student teacher there while pursuing a dual degree in child and family studies and early childhood education. Joan S. Supiro, the longtime director of the Early Education and Child Care Center (EECCC), was appointed as the first non-faculty director of the EECCC in the early 1970s. Supiro, along with many of the teachers at EECCC, has served the campus community with innovative and compassionate child care for several decades. “Legions of SU faculty, graduate students, and staff—myself included—have benefited from the model child care programs we have at EECCC and BMW,” Murphy says.

According to Murphy, the Reillys’ visionary gift will build on this rich tradition, launching a new phase of educating teachers and community child care providers. “This is an excellent example of a synergetic partnership between the University and the community in which we reside,” Murphy says. “And now we get to build something that will meet our needs over the next several decades. That is exciting!”