



## **THE FACE OF EVEN START**

The William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program serves a clientele unique from that of other federal education programs. To get a clear picture of the challenges facing program directors and participants, one must understand the literacy and other needs of parents struggling to educate themselves and their children so they can be true partners in education.

### **Participant characteristics (based on 2000-2001 data)**

- 44% of parents had a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education or less.
- 84% of families have an income below the federal poverty level.
- 77% were unemployed.
- 46% were Hispanic; 30% were white; 19% were African-American, and the remaining 7% were Asian, Native American, Hawaiian or Multi-Racial.
- 45% of new Even Start enrollees speak English as a Second Language.
- 68% of the children were below the age of four.

### **Parents Participate in Even Start to**

- Further their education/ get their GED
- Become a better parent
- Improve their child's chance of school success
- Become a better teacher to their child
- Learn English
- Improve chances of getting a job

### **Even Start and the Robinson Family**

In 1998, when Ms. Robinson enrolled in an Even Start Program, she was a young mother with four small children. At first, depressed, withdrawn, and angry, she gradually made friends with other students as her self-esteem increased. Although math and writing skills were a challenge, she worked hard, persevered, and obtained her GED in 1999. One of her goals while attending Even Start was to move out of subsidized housing and for the past three years, she has had her own apartment. In the six years since she enrolled in Even Start, she has become engaged to be married and completed a medical assistance training program, graduating in December 2004 with a 4.0 average. Lolita works part-time as a medical caretaker in homes and plans to continue her education and become a registered nurse. Ms. Robinson also has instilled a positive attitude toward education and literacy in her children. Three of her four children attended the onsite Even Start Program and all are now honor roll students. She has used the lessons learned through Even Start to transform her life and continues to use those skills to grow both personally and professionally. The Pennsylvania Association of Adult Continuing Education recently honored Ms. Robinson with an Outstanding Adult Student Award.