



**Summa Associates**  
*Child & Elder Care that Works*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**“Close To Home<sup>®</sup>” Taking Care of Businesses**  
*Home-based Child-Care Network Offers Best-Case System*

**TEMPE, Ariz – (Oct. 18, 2004)** Employees who experience work-family conflict are three times more likely to think about quitting their jobs as those who do not. Realizing that neither the private sector nor the government has answers to child care dilemmas faced by working parents, some Arizona businesses stepped up with a creative solution in a program called **Close To Home<sup>®</sup>**. Now additional corporate support is needed to ensure the program will flourish.

Armed with convincing data indicating the critical importance of child care solutions for working parents, a coalition of Arizona businesses, including Intel, Bashas', Honeywell, Salt River Project, Arizona State University and AT&T joined together with Tempe-based work-life consultants Summa Associates to create the **Close To Home** program nearly 10 years ago. Originally funded in a public/private cooperative with the American Business Collaboration, the program has been funded over the last five years exclusively by Valley businesses. While the start-up financial burden has been borne by a few, the results have been overwhelmingly positive and represent an opportunity for the business community at large ... a new model for solving key issues effecting employees.

“In-home child care is a key element of Intel’s childcare strategy,” explains **Adam Sorensen**, Work/Life Program Manager, **Intel Corporation**. “Through our participation in Close to Home, we have been able to invest in improving the quality and professionalism of in-home child care and provide a broader range of flexible child care options to our employees. Close to Home is an innovative approach to child care that benefits not only our employees, but also the community and the care providers. We see Close to Home as a real win-win-win.”

According to **Karen Woodford**, President of **Summa Associates**, “We are at a critical juncture where the program’s success should be recognized and celebrated. As we renew the financial commitment from our existing partners, we need to reach out to our business community to support and grow this program. The foundation is very strong, and program participation offers new business participants the benefit of a strong network and a proven track record of positive results.

“The multi-firm, collaborative program is a creative example of how Arizona companies are recognizing the bottom-line importance of addressing the needs of their parent workforce,” says Woodford. “Work-life initiatives are a major factor in employee retention and productivity. Considering the cost of personnel replacement, absenteeism and low morale, companies are finding that work-life programs like Close to Home are an investment that pays off.”

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**Close To Home** has been recognized by the Department of Labor as an outstanding service to the community in the way it aligns the needs of both business and employees to provide the highest quality child care for parents who must work, some for extended hours, and who want their children close by. The Close To Home home-based network also provides care for infants, which many child care centers do not accept.

According to a recent needs assessment survey, administered by Summa Associates for ten Ventura county California employers, 60 percent of parent respondents say their ability to not miss work or to work longer hours is impacted by child care responsibilities. Of the parents surveyed, a significant 34 percent had considered leaving their job during the previous year due to child care problems.

Since its inception, the Close To Home program has recruited approximately one thousand new child care homes and expanded slots for children by 4,000. But the program has only scratched the surface, notes Woodford, and has blossomed in relative obscurity. The infrastructure is now in place for many more firms to learn about and join the collaboration and start reaping the benefits ... and keeping productive employees at work.

Child care providers who participate in the Close to Home program are committed to professional development through training that meets the guidelines of recognized authorities like the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The providers, who work diligently to create a safe, home-like environment for their charges, are available for workdays that begin or end during hours when traditional child care centers are closed. Woodford estimates the program has saved Arizona companies millions of dollars in reduced absenteeism and employee turnover over the years.

For more information about the Close To Home program, contact Summa Associates at 480-921-2266 or visit [www.summa-assoc.com](http://www.summa-assoc.com).

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*October has been designated as National Work and Family Month by Senate resolution 210, which states that “supporting a balance between work and personal life is in the best interest of national worker productivity,” and “reducing the conflict between work and family life should be a national priority.”*

### **What is Work-Life?**

“Work-Life” is the practice of providing initiatives designed to create a more flexible, supportive work environment, enabling employees to focus on work tasks while at work. It includes making the culture more supportive, adding programs to meet life event needs, ensuring that policies give employees as much control as possible over their lives, and using flexible work practices as a strategy to meet the dual agenda — the needs of both business and employees.

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