



...Because every child deserves a childhood

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Astor's Head Start Center Receives Grant to Enhance Outdoor Play

Reston, VA, (September 1, 2009) — Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play today announced Astor Services for Children & Families as one of 351 recipients of a \$4,326.31 grant to improve the outdoor play space at its Pine Plains Center in Pine Plains, NY. The National Center was created through a federal grant to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAP) from the Office of Head Start.

According to Astor's Assistant Executive Director of its Early Childhood Programs and Head Start Center Director, Mary Sontheimer, "We appreciate Head Start Body Start for helping us evaluate our play spaces and educate our children and their families about the value of physical activity and playing outdoors, in particular. This grant will enable us to enhance our ability to get children and families involved in the importance and of physical activities."

"Outdoor play is associated with greater amounts of physical activity in children, and research has shown that opportunities for whole body exercise has a long lasting influence as preschool physical activity tracks throughout childhood," said Center Director, Karin H. Spencer, EdD. "Unfortunately children today spend less time playing outdoors than any previous generations," added Spencer. "We want to help the Head Start staff discover the benefits of outdoor play across developmental domains and learn about the features of high quality outdoor play spaces that promote movement opportunities for children of all ability levels."

In addition to play space improvement, each award-winning Head Start Center will have targeted training, technical assistance and the expertise of a physical activity consultant as well as access to online courses, webinars and resource materials. One of their first initiatives will be celebrating the inaugural *Take it Outside! Week*, October 19 through 23, 2009. To learn more about *Take It Outside! Week*, visit www.headstartbodystart.org.

Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play (HSBS) is a project of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAR), which are associations of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD). Funding for HSBS is provided by the Office of Head Start (OHS), Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of HSBS is to increase physical activity, outdoor play and



healthy eating among Head Start and Early Head Start children, families and staff. HSBS will assist Head Start programs in creating healthy learning environments, both in and outside the classroom, through structured and unstructured

physical activity that leads to the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of young children and reduces obesity and its associated costs. HSBS has three main objectives: (1) to inform and assist OHS in setting national priorities and developing policies; (2) to provide resources, training and technical assistance to Head Start and Early Head Start Centers; and (3) to administer and support grants for construction or improvement of outdoor play spaces at Head Start Centers.

Astor Services for Children & Families (formerly The Astor Home for Children, as it has since 1953, promotes the well-being of children, adolescents and their families through a range of programs that prevent and treat emotional problems and facilitate healthy development. Now serving over 6,000 children and families annually, Astor's current range of services to families in the Mid-Hudson Valley and the Bronx include: Residential Treatment, Therapeutic Foster Family Care, Early Childhood Programs, and Community-Based Behavioral Health and Prevention Services. For additional information about Astor Services for Children & Families, please visit their website at www.astorservices.org or call Astor Services for Children & Families: Home for Children Foundation at (845) 871-1117.