

CAPITAL AREA HEAD START BREAKS GROUND ON NATURE-BASED PNC GROW UP GREAT® PLAY AREA

Preschool students at Capital Area Head Start's Granite Street Center in Harrisburg will soon have a new outdoor area for nature-based play and learning.

HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA, USA, April 11, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Preschool students at [Capital Area Head Start's](#) Granite Street Center in Harrisburg will soon have a new outdoor area for nature-based play and learning, thanks to a \$75,000 grant from PNC Foundation through its signature early childhood education initiative, PNC Grow Up Great®. The grant will also support training in outdoor education strategies and activities for Capital Area Head Start teachers.



Capital Area Head Start Groundbreaking

“

Research shows that children experience better learning in nature-based settings,”

Jim Hoehn, PNC Regional President for Central PA

Initial plans for the nature-based learning environment include:

- A large, raised digging area filled with sand so that children can dig using excavators and other tools
- A gardening area suitable for cultivating and growing vegetables and flowers
- A gathering area for children and teachers to share their discoveries
- A climbing area featuring natural objects such as tree

stumps and rocks to help children develop gross motor skills

- An area for classic measuring, mixing and building fun
- Art areas to provide a place to create nature-inspired art and music
- A pathway through a sensory garden designed with different textures, scents and sounds to stimulate and satisfy sensory needs for neurodiverse children

The project to expand existing outdoor learning amenities at the Center is one of many such projects across the country funded by PNC Foundation as part of its celebration of the 20th anniversary of PNC Grow Up Great®.

“Research shows that children experience better learning in nature-based settings,” said Jim Hoehn, PNC regional president for Central Pa. “We are thrilled to mark the 20th anniversary of PNC Grow Up Great, our signature philanthropic initiative, by embarking on a project to promote outdoor learning with one of our longstanding local partners, and we look forward to many more years of making a difference for kids in our region.”



PNC helps Capital Area Head Start break ground on a new outdoor play area

Recent PNC-funded research by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) showed that 49% of children ages 3-5 are playing outside less than once a day. A recent NIEER literature review also suggests that pre-K programs conducted in nature-based settings can promote better learning and development.

The new outdoor nature-based learning environment at Granite Street Center will develop children’s senses and help them learn about growing food, the cycles of life, respect for the environment, habitat, seasons and conservation.

“Nature-based play offers children opportunities to connect with the world around them, enhancing their physical, mental, and emotional health,” said Shawnee Hooper, executive director of Capital Area Head Start, “We are grateful to PNC Foundation for funding this project, and we thank them for their partnership that has helped so many children in our region get a head start in life over the past two decades.”

PNC Foundation has provided support for children and families within Capital Area Head Start since 2005, enhancing STEAM and literacy initiatives to help children grow and develop.

About PNC Foundation

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (www.pnc.com), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic

mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through PNC Grow Up Great®, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual \$500 million, multiyear initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. For more information, visit <http://www.pncgrowupgreat.com>.

About Capital Area Head Start

Capital Area Head Start, a program of Keystone Human Services, has been supporting children and families in Central Pennsylvania since 1988, giving children a head start in life, empowering parents, and strengthening families. Head Start pre-kindergarten programs are comprehensive, state- and federally-funded child development programs serving children 3-5. Early Head Start serves women who are pregnant and children ages birth to three.

About Keystone Human Services

KHS is a multi-national human services organization based in Harrisburg, PA. KHS operates in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, the Republic of Moldova, and India, providing advocacy, services, and supports in early childhood education and family support, mental health, autism, and intellectual, developmental, cognitive, and physical disability. We build communities where everyone can thrive, direct their own lives, establish homes, find meaningful work, pursue education alongside their peers, and fill valued roles in the community. In addition to operating as KHS, KHS provides services through Susquehanna Service Dogs (SSD), Capital Area Head Start (CAHS), Partnerships for People, Key Human Services, Keystone Autism Services, Keystone Moldova, and Keystone Institute India.

More information can be found at KHS.org and KeystoneMoldova.md

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