

**COMMUNITY ACTION**

## Head Start needs you to Get on the Bus

JANUARY 13, 2013 3:00 AM • [KIM OROPALLO, SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN](#)

The Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency's Head Start/Early Head Start program is a comprehensive child development program for income-eligible children ages birth to 5 and their families. The program provides education, health, nutrition, disability and family services at no charge. Licensed Head Start sites are located in Auburn, southern Cayuga, Cato and Moravia. Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Head Start/EHS serves 368 children and their families in Cayuga County annually. Partnerships with the Auburn, Moravia, Southern Cayuga and Jordan-Elbridge school districts provide Head Start/Universal Prekindergarten collaborative classrooms. Blending Head Start funds with state UPK funds gives us the opportunity to offer enhanced full-day services for 4-year-old children prior to their transition to kindergarten. What makes the Head Start/EHS program successful and different from other preschool programs is the philosophy that parents are their child's first teachers. The program works respectfully and cooperatively with families, building on their strengths, assisting parents with their goals for themselves and their children, and blending the expertise and experiences of both the program and the family to achieve a quality preschool experience for all children.

Each year the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency's Head Start/EHS program must raise in-kind donations to match a portion of its federal funding. The Head Start Act mandates that the federal share of the total costs of the Head Start program not exceed 80 percent of the total budget. If the program fails to obtain the required 20 percent non-federal share, a disallowance of federal funds may be taken. What does this mean, you may be asking yourself? Simply put, if we do not match 20 percent of our federal funding from other sources, we are at risk of losing funding that supports the youngest and most vulnerable children in our community!

The Head Start program needs you to Get on the Bus and help our local preschool students! The Get on the Bus initiative is a project of Leadership Cayuga group members Shereen Androsko, Scott DeJoy, Janet Pendergraph, Betsy DeGross, Morgan Festa and Nick Smith. These community members worked together to assist the Head Start program to develop a new way to secure sustainable donations to fill the federal requirement for in-kind donations. The required in-kind match is made possible each year through the generosity of the individuals, corporations and school districts within our community. I urge you to become a part of this effort.

Get on the Bus is a way you can help to improve education in our community by investing in our children. How can you as an individual or corporation Get on the Bus? There are many ways, such as volunteering time in the program, donating items for the children's classrooms or playgrounds, paying for a field trip, providing paper products such as tissues and paper towels, planting and weeding in our garden, purchasing a bus

or van, sharing expertise to advise us, and providing services to the children. All these ways and many more demonstrate how our community comes together to support the education of our children. Please Get on the Bus, and help our children be better prepared for a lifetime of learning.

If you would like to be a corporate sponsor for our Get on the Bus initiative, or if you would like to donate time, a service, talent, and/or items to our Head Start program, please call me at 252-0038 ext. 207. Please help support our most precious community resource: our children.