



HEAD START HELPS LOCAL CHILDREN

Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency: After 50 years, Head Start as helpful as ever



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On May 18, 2015, Head Start celebrated 50 years of providing services to children and families living in poverty in an effort to help people become self-sufficient. In recognition of the 50-year anniversary of Head Start, all Head Start programs were asked to plant a rose bush in a special place that will remind everyone of the commitment that was made in the Rose Garden 50 years ago in 1965. Locally, this planting took place at the Head Start center located at 1 Brookfield Place in Auburn.

As the new early childhood program director for Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency's Early Head Start and Head Start/UPK programming, I was excited to be a part of this celebration. I started my career with Head Start 20 years ago as a preschool teacher while pursuing my degree in psychology/child life. After graduating and going to work in the public school system, I realized that working in early child education and helping families was where I needed to be. I returned to Head Start in 2007 as a site supervisor in Onondaga County. I am looking forward to my new position and embracing the changes ahead. As the year is winding down, there have been some exciting new ventures.

Renovations: Renovations were made in the fall 2014 to the reception and office areas of our Auburn center. A major part of this renovation was the conversion of office and storage space into a new children's library. We are proud to have such a beautifully designed, open and bright space for families and children to visit! They can get cozy and share a book in the covered reading nook or select a puppet from the custom-made tree bookshelf to use for props in storytelling. We anticipate the installation of a Smart Board for children and teacher use (summer 2015). There is also space in this room for an adult learning/work station equipped with computers and Internet access, brochures and other informative literature on parenting, employment, etc. Families will be able to use this area for researching job and educational opportunities.

Transitions: The process has begun for children who are transitioning from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start/UPK to kindergarten. Classrooms have been scheduling fieldtrips to local elementary schools, giving both children and families an opportunity to visit what may be their kindergarten class in the fall; the children get to see

what the “big kids” schools look like. Teachers are also planning end-of-the-year picnics where families and children gather together, reminisce about the school year and enjoy some good food, games and fun.

Backpack program: We are looking forward to implementing the new Head Start backpack program in 2015-2016, a program in which the agency will provide food to families in need on the weekends. Distribution will occur once a month and has received generous support from Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Cayuga Community Fund.

Collaborations: We are working closely with the Auburn Enlarged City School District under the Universal Prekindergarten grant. This has provided Head Start with many opportunities for expansion, mentoring, training and the acquisition of new curricula and materials. We also have UPK collaborations with Moravia, Southern Cayuga and Jordan-Elbridge. Partnering with Cayuga Counseling Services and Integrative Counseling Services has provided the agency with the opportunity to expand mental health services to children and families.

If you go

WHAT: Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency 50th Anniversary Celebration

WHEN: 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday, May 7

WHERE: Cayuga Museum of History & Art, 203 Genesee St., Auburn

COST: Free and open to the public

INFO: Call (315) 253-8051 or (315) 255-1703