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CEDA celebrates four decades of Head Start

CEDA kicks off Head Start enrollment for 2007-08 school year March 30 at 25 suburban CEDA locations

CHICAGO (March 20, 2007) – Kimberly Burt was told her daughter, Aiyana Mayfield, would be “delayed learning” because she was born prematurely. But CEDA Head Start helped Aiyana, now 5, to prove them all wrong. She’s developing normally and is ready to begin kindergarten in the fall.

The Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, Inc. (CEDA), believes every child deserves the same chance to learn early the skills that lead to long-term academic success. That’s why CEDA sponsors the Head Start program in 25 locations county-wide – and every one of them will host a kick-off event on March 30, when enrollment for the 2007-'08 academic year opens.

The start of the 2007-08 school year will mark CEDA’s 42nd year with Head Start program. As a national program, Head Start began in 1965 and CEDA initiated the first Head Start program in suburban Cook County just two years later.

Enrollment for the 2007-08 school year in CEDA’s Head Start locations will continue through mid-August. From resource fairs to sock hops, each CEDA center is planning an event for the 42nd anniversary milestone. Some centers’ outreach efforts will include knocking on doors, mass mailings and distributing flyers.

Head Start and Early Head Start are comprehensive child and family development programs. Both are designed to develop the basic educational skills necessary to succeed in school and the social skills to participate and subsequently contribute to the welfare of the community.

For many families, CEDA’s Head Start program is a springboard to other programs and services the organization offers. Little Aiyana’s mother, Kimberly Burt, finds that CEDA’s parenting classes have taught her skills that help her family to function better. Burt adds that her involvement in other programs at the Ford Heights center has helped her to become more social.

Unita Sims, CEDA’s vice president of Children and Family Services, says research shows that children who experience early childhood education are more likely to master early the cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social skills needed to succeed in school. Head Start and Early Head Start help the whole family, she explains, by offering parents a deeper understanding of their children, including the crucial information of whether children are developing appropriately.

CEDA Head Start offers half-day programs for either morning or afternoon classes during the traditional school year. Comprehensive services include health, nutrition, child development, mental health social services and services to children with disabilities.

Early Head Start (EHS) helps new parents set health, education and self-sufficiency goals for themselves and their families. EHS provides full day care for infants and toddlers age 0 to 3. Services are also available in a home-based setting to pregnant women and their families. To be eligible for the program, children must be from low-income families. For more information on CEDA Head Start, call (877) 717-8278, or visit www.cedaorg.net.

As one of the largest private non-profit organizations in the country, CEDA serves more than 200,000 Cook County residents annually through more than 30 programs and services in the areas of child and family development, health and nutrition services, senior citizen programs, economic development, employment and job training, housing services, education services and community development.

CEDA constantly improves and expands our services to further our mission of assisting individuals, families and communities. CEDA has more than 625 full- and part-time employees and nearly 4,500 volunteers dedicated to helping Chicago-area residents attain economic self-sufficiency and improve their quality of life.

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