

MVCDC Named for 'National Farm to Head Start' Program Recognition Dayton's Early Childhood Education Center One of Four Featured in United States



Dayton, Ohio (Montgomery County) – October 17, 2012 – Newly opened for the 2012-2013 school year is the first farm-based early childhood education center in the United States. The center, located at Aullwood's Discovery Farm Center, opened in August and is operated by Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc.

The preschool education arrangement recently caught the attention of the National Head Start Association and National Farm to School program. On October 18, these organizations will recognize four head start centers in the United States for their farm to school initiatives.

MVCDC's early childhood development classroom will feature a special farm to school learning lecture:

Thursday, October 18, 2012 at 1:00 p.m.

**The Nature/Farm Play Early Childhood Learning Center at Aullwood Discovery Farm
9101 Frederick Road – Dayton, Ohio 45414**

The young learners, ages 3-5, will discover how their working farm environment can be used to produce nutritious food for the table. The children will stroll to the chicken house to harvest fresh eggs. They will return to the classroom to learn how to prepare healthy dishes with eggs, locally grown garden herbs and vegetables, fresh blueberries, and apples. At the end of the lesson, the children will sample a number of recipes made with farm fresh ingredients.

According to Mary Burns, president of MVCDC, "Many of our students only know urban living. This natural environment with animals and gardens—all on a sprawling and sustainable working farm—incorporates great experiential learning for our young learners during their formative years."

The Nature/Farm Play Early Childhood Learning Center at Aullwood Discovery Farm is possible through a collaborative partnership. Partners include Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc., Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm, and National Audubon Society. Morning and afternoon classes are offered Monday through Thursday through MVCDC.

Dedicated this past May, the \$4.4 million state-of-the-art, 11,000 square foot farmhouse building features lots of windows and natural light, cathedral ceilings, natural wood, and interactive learning exhibits. A creative outdoor playspace design allows children to climb and explore in a natural environment. MVCDC's credentialed teacher to preschool child ratio of 2:17 is lower than state minimum to allow for a higher degree of individualized attention.

The three other farm to school initiatives being recognized by NHTSA and the National Farm to School program include **Mid Coast Maine Community Action Head Start, Bath, Maine; Mountain Projects Community Action Agency Head Start, Waynesville, North Carolina;** and **Mount Hood Community College Head Start, Portland, Oregon.**

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ABOUT MIAMI VALLEY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS, INC.

[Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc.](#) was incorporated in 1964 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. The agency began providing comprehensive Head Start services to low income children ages three to five years in 1965. Today, Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. is funded to serve 2,421 children ages 3-5 years and 388 children ages 0-3 in Clark, Madison, and Montgomery Counties, Ohio. Funding is provided through the US Department of Health and Human Services; Administration for Children and Families; and the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. The agency manages 50 center locations and employs 450 employees.

MVCDC's program outcomes focus on school readiness for children ages birth to five. Each child is assessed at the beginning of the school year and periodically throughout the year. Results are regularly reviewed and tabulated to determine each child's progress and what is required for continued development. Most services benefit families of low income.

A primary focus at MVCDC is to promote successful families by teaching parenting and life skills, and to ensure children are ready for success in school. A holistic and balanced approach is taken to work with each child and their family in the areas of parent engagement, health, nutrition, social competency, literacy, and numeracy development.

ABOUT AULLWOOD AUDUBON CENTER AND FARM

The Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm began as a dream in 2004 and is now a great learning tool for the whole community. The sprawling, working farm was missing a 'farmhouse'. The doors to the new [Farm Discovery Center](#) or 'farmhouse' opened May 2012. Kettering Family Philanthropies donated \$1.3 million to the total \$7 million project. The venue has facilities to house business meetings, retreats, and conferences for up to 250 people. The farmhouse includes classrooms, an auditorium, and a catering kitchen. In 2011, 68,000 children were taken on learning tours of the 200-acre grounds, which includes creeks, farm animals, petting areas, digging gardens, and seven miles of hiking trails.

About National Head Start Association

[NHTSA](#) serves to be the untiring voice that will not be quiet until every vulnerable child is served with the Head Start model of support for the whole child, the family and the community. The agency serves as an advocate and works diligently for policy and institutional changes that ensure all vulnerable children and families have what they need to succeed.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

The [National Farm to School Network](#) is a network of national staff, state and regional leads and thousands of Farm to School practitioners, advocates and community leaders working to make Farm to School programs an essential component of strong and just local and regional food systems, and ensuring the health of all school children, farms, the environment, economy and communities. NFSN is a project of The Tides Center.

ABOUT HEAD START

Created in 1965, [Head Start](#) is the most successful, longest-running, national school readiness program in the United States. It provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. More than 22 million preschool aged children have benefited from Head Start.

- 30 -



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