



## Business and Education Media Alert

# \$15,000 Grant Awarded to Enhance Early Child Development and Outdoor Learning

Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. to Upgrade Three Head Start Centers

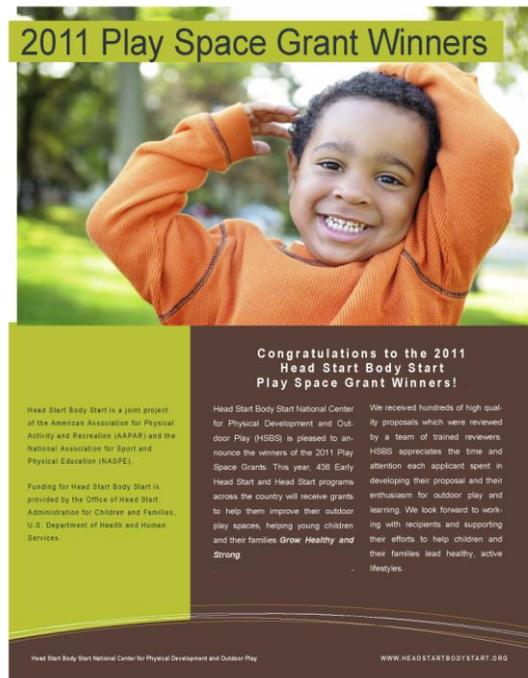
Dayton, Ohio, July 5, 2011 - The [Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play](#) announced a \$15,000 outdoor learning award to Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Three early childhood development sites will receive \$5,000 each to improve the outdoor play space at their locations:

- Valley View Center, 64 Comstock, Germantown
- Twin Towers Center, 517 Noel Court, Dayton
- Miami View Center, 830 West Fifth, Dayton

The funding will allow the centers to purchase value-added packages from a list of preferred vendors. Equipment offerings were chosen by a team of evaluators for developmental appropriateness, safety, and play and monetary value. The National Center was created through a federal grant to the [National Association for Sport and Physical Education](#) (NASPE) and the [American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation](#) (AAPAR) from the [Office of Head Start](#).

According to Mary Burns, the President and CEO of Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc., "these grants will help us evaluate our outdoor play spaces and support good physical health for our youngest children."



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In addition to the play space improvement grants, each award-winning center will have access to online courses, webinars, and resource materials. According to Burns, the Kings Highway Center, 3805 Kings Highway, Dayton, received one of these grants in 2010. A "living playground" is currently under construction and a public unveiling is planned in the near future.

Burns added that Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. supports outdoor play in its advanced child development curriculum and supports research by Head Start Body Start:

Encouraging children to get outside, get moving, and connect with the natural world are all ways to reverse childhood obesity rates. Kids who play outside are happier, healthier, and stronger!

According to Fjortoft 2004; Burdette and Whitaker 2005, children who play outdoors regularly:

- Become fitter and leaner
- Develop stronger immune systems
- Have more active imaginations
- Have lower stress levels
- Play more creatively
- Have greater respect for themselves and others

Time spent outdoors is also the best way to get vitamin D. According to the *Journal of Pediatrics*, 70% of American kids are not getting enough vitamin D, which can lead to a host of health issues. Time spent outdoors is also shown to reduce myopia (near sightedness) in children (*Optometry and Vision Science*, 2008).

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## **ABOUT Head Start Body Start**

[Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play](#) (HSBS) is the place to find information and resources to engage young children (ages 0-5) and their families in active play and meaningful movement! A collaboration between the [American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation](#) (AAPAR) and the [National Association for Sport and Physical Education](#) (NASPE) HSBS is funded by a grant from the [Administration for Children and Families](#).

The Center serves early childhood professionals, caregivers, families, and communities helping them to create dynamic play/learning environments and promote physical activity throughout children's days. HSBS offers grants for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs to enhance outdoor play spaces that promote healthy movement and help foster development across all domains.

**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 2,522 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'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 to assist in their continued development. The program targets most of its services toward families of low income.

A primary focus of this effort is an emphasis on helping families by teaching parenting skills and life skills. MVCDC works holistically with each child and family through a balanced approach of parent involvement, health, nutrition, social competency, literacy and numeracy development. This combination is what ensures that Head Start children will be ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.

**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.

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Media contact:

Tina Marker  
Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. (Windward Design Group LLC)  
937.545.9654  
[tina@windward-design.com](mailto:tina@windward-design.com)