



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 1, 2009

CONTACT: Jo Ann Dollard

847/390-1446

## **Openings still available at LSSI's North Austin Head Start Program**

North Austin Head Start, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), currently has openings for its full-day and half-day preschool programs. The site is located at 1500 N. Mason Avenue, adjacent to the North Austin Lutheran Church in Chicago.

The program provides early childhood education for up to 54 pre-school children between three and five years old. New enrollees for the full-day program, who are signed up by September 17, are eligible for a \$40 co-pay stipend. The half-day program is free. The Head Start program is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

“North Austin Head Start is one of the best-kept secrets in the community,” says Carol Endemann, who directs LSSI’s Head Start programs. “We adhere to strict Head Start standards and an official education curriculum. Our teachers do an outstanding job of preparing the children for kindergarten.” North Austin also has English- and Spanish-speaking teachers.

LSSI’s commitment to early literacy is exemplified through its Bonding with Books program, a unique family literacy program offered at all five of its Head Start sites that gives 10 free hardback books to each child, one per month from October to May. The program also offers free educational field trips, some of which are linked to books that are being read in the classroom.

“I am a working parent,” says Brigette Watson, whose 4-year-old son Pedro attends the North Austin Head Start program. “I love the school, the staff and the teachers. My son, he learns so much – he knows all [the names of] the animals in the book, dinosaurs, colors, ABCs and months of the year. The teachers are really good; they teach the kids really well. [Pedro] was glad to get back to school this year; he was happy to see his teachers again.”

Last fall, the center was the recipient of a new playground, thanks to volunteers from Kohl’s stores and Children’s Memorial Hospital, who helped to install new equipment, which included slides and a tire swing. Volunteers also installed Soft Surface rubber tiles on the playground’s

- more -

surface and enhanced the center's landscaping. The \$75,000 renovation was funded by Kohl's Cares for Kids, in collaboration with the Injury Prevention and Research Center at Children's Memorial Hospital, which managed the project.

For many of the children, the playground at the site is the only one they have to explore, run and climb safely. The new playground is "important because it enables us to give the kids the physical activity they need," says Doris Holden, site director. "In our classrooms, there's no place for climbing, jumping, hopping or skipping — what we call large motor activities. The playground is a great place for that." And the students are thrilled with their new playground.

LSSI's North Austin Head Start program has served the community since 1982 and is one of five Head Start programs that LSSI offers in the Chicago area.

*For more information about North Austin Head Start, call Doris Holden, site director, at 773/237-1930. For more information about Lutheran Social Services of Illinois' Head Start program, call Carol Endemann at 847/390-1494 or visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).*

###

### **About Lutheran Social Services of Illinois**

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LSSI's services include foster care, adoption, pregnancy counseling, Head Start, child care services, services for at-risk families, residential services for youth, counseling, mental health, substance abuse treatment, residential programs for adults with developmental disabilities, housing and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, nursing care and rehabilitation, and programs for prisoners and their families. For more information on Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).