

WHEDCO'S HEAD START PROGRAM GOES BACK TO SCHOOL AT THE TOP OF THE CLASS WITH NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

WHEDCo is Among the First to Earn the "Gold Standard" for Early Childhood Education

Bronx, NY – (September 8, 2008) - The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCo), a community based non-profit organization dedicated to building a more beautiful and prosperous Bronx, is proud to announce its Urban Horizons' Early Childhood Discovery Center Head Start will begin the 2008-2009 school year as one of the first programs in the nation to earn accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) under their newly revised more stringent standards– the nation's leading organization of early childhood professionals.

After an intensive two year evaluation process, WHEDCo's Head Start Center has earned national accreditation through NAEYC's program that the Wall Street Journal calls the "gold standard" for early childhood education. NAEYC's more rigorous review process looked at every facet of WHEDCo's program, from the level of staff expertise and board oversight to lesson plans and sharpened pencils.

"We are thrilled to have earned the highest mark of quality from NAEYC, and are proud to be recognized as a leader in a national effort to provide excellence in early childhood education," said WHEDCo's Head Start Center program director, Rose Rivera. "This distinction lets families in our community know that Head Start here in the Bronx is reaching the highest professional standards and is committed to providing the best care and early learning experiences possible to our children."

WHEDCo's Head Start program was recognized by NAEYC for promoting positive relationships among children and adults, implementing a curriculum that encourages exceptional learning and development, using developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching practices, and maintaining collaborative relationships with each child's family and community organizations.

"The new NAEYC Accreditation system raises the bar for preschools, child care centers and other early childhood programs," said Mark Ginsberg, Ph.D., executive director of NAEYC. "WHEDCo's NAEYC Accreditation is a sign that they are a leader in a national effort to invest in high-quality early childhood education, and to help give all children a better start."

Now in its 10th year, WHEDCo's Head Start program serves 104 pre-school children from 18 countries, and their families, offering a safe, nurturing and activity-rich learning environment. In addition to stellar academic programming for each child, every Head Start family meets with a team of Family Workers who are dedicated to providing on-going support and social services to help with housing, hunger, nutrition and early intervention educational services. Over 180 parents have participated in English language and family development classes through WHEDCo's Head Start Family Literacy program. In collaboration with Literacy Partners Inc., each three and a half hour session meets four times a week, serving 25 parents per session. Having added afternoon literacy sessions, doubling their capacity, WHEDCo expect to fill every seat in the 2008-2009 school year.

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