

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care receives Level Four Award from Maine Quality Rating System

Lewiston, ME (November 20, 2008) - In recognition of its excellent child care program and its ongoing commitment to children, Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care's Washburn Center in Auburn, River Street Center, B Street Center, and Early Head Start Center, all in Lewiston, have received an Award for the Highest Level on the Maine Early Care and Education Quality Rating System, Quality For ME, from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Early Childhood Division.

"We applaud Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care's three full day pre-school and child care centers for their commitment to children. By going above and beyond Maine's licensing standards, Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care gives its young children the opportunity to grow and develop in a stimulating, nurturing environment," said Carolyn Drugge, State Child Care Administrator.

Maine's Quality Rating System is a voluntary rating system for early care and education centers and family child care homes. Participating programs can earn a one, two, three or four step rating by meeting an extensive list of quality bench-marks. Experts say these benchmarks improve the growth and development potential of children. The rating system gives parents a useful tool for selecting quality early childhood programs.

Quality Programs at this Highest Level meet the following criteria:

- Awarded "Blue" Quality Certificate from National Head Start Association.
- Classroom teachers have met higher education and training standards.
- Program has a plan to implement a salary scale that is based on professional qualifications. This policy results in better qualified teachers and lower turnover rate.
- The Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines and/or Supporting Maine's Infants and Toddlers-Guidelines for Learning and Development are being implemented in the classrooms.

"Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care is pleased to receive the Level Four Award. It shows parents that we are serious about the quality of our program. For our families, this means there are better educated teachers working at our centers, a commitment to making early learning an

important part of our program, and a higher degree of professionalism all around,” said Estelle Rubinstein, Executive Director of Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care.

Achieving these standards is crucial for the future of Maine’s children as more parents join the workforce and more children are cared for outside the home. In Maine, 65 percent of children under the age of six have both parents in the workforce. At the same time, 90 percent of brain development occurs before the age of five. Children who attend high quality early learning programs, particularly low income children, are more likely to stay in school, attend college, earn more money and be employed in high-skilled jobs later in life.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services implemented the Quality Rating System statewide in March 2008. The goals of the Quality Rating System are:

- To recognize early care and education programs that provide quality care;
- To encourage providers to increase their level of quality;
- To provide parents with identifiable standards of quality.

Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care has provided quality child development services to pregnant women, families, and children, newborn to age five, for over forty-three years. Program options include Full Day, Half Day, Pre-Kindergarten partnerships with local elementary schools, Home Based, Family Child Care, Infant and Toddler Early Head Start, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Services through these programs are provided annually to over nine hundred children and families throughout Androscoggin County. Centers are located in Lewiston, Auburn, Lisbon Falls, Livermore Falls, and Mechanic Falls.

Applications for all Head Start programs are accepted at any time. Full day childcare services are available on a sliding fee scale for parents who are working, continuing their education, or participating in job training thirty or more hours per week. Please call (207) 795-4040 for more information. Please visit our website at www.androkids.com. Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care is a United Way funded and Lewiston and Auburn CDBG supported agency.

Photo Attachment: Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care parent Julita smiles at her 3 month old daughter, Jaedalyn.



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