

Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Breaks Ground On Early Childhood Education Center

10,000 square foot facility will open in 2013 and serve 150 children; \$1 million in funding provided by the John R. Oishei Foundation

BUFFALO, N.Y.—Construction began today on a new early childhood education center that will help prepare children in one of Buffalo's most economically distressed communities for successful transitions to kindergarten, elementary school and beyond – the first step in the cradle-to-college-and-career continuum being implemented in the new Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in the 14215 zip code.

Community and local, state and federal government officials today joined representatives from the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in a ground breaking ceremony to celebrate the beginning of construction on BPN's education center at Bailey Avenue and Amherst Street in Buffalo.

Scheduled to open in 2013, the 10,000-square-foot facility will serve approximately one hundred fifty children from infancy to age 5. The center will be located across the street from the Westminster Community Charter School and will be operated by Buffalo Promise Neighborhood and Bethel Head Start.

"The early childhood education center will literally serve as the foundation for academic success for children in the Promise Neighborhood," said [Mark J. Czarnecki](#), President of [M&T Bank](#) and Chairman of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Board of Directors. "Transforming an economically challenged neighborhood so that it can prosper again is a process that starts and ends with providing its children the opportunity to achieve this success."

"The early childhood education center will help nurture the community's youth in order to prepare them for elementary school, high school, college and beyond," said David K. Chamberlain, Vice Chairman, Westminster Foundation and CEO, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood. "The construction of this center on a vacant site also continues the physical transformation of the local community with many more improvements in the months to come."

The early childhood education center is an integral component of BPN's Early Foundations continuum initiative that integrates health, family, parenting, literacy and early learning services for children under the age of five and their families in the Promise Neighborhood.

Other components include: outreach and new parent classes where every parent of a newborn will be offered coaching and parenting resources administered through Every Person Influences Children (EPIC); a high quality medical home to promote the importance of child health through the Community Health Center for Buffalo as well as the establishment of a student success center located within the Center.

In addition Early Foundations will build a unified and shared child health and cognitive development screenings system; through Read to Succeed Buffalo a literacy advocacy program will be implemented to improve early learning and literacy across all multiple settings that provide care for children; and, to address the epidemic of teen pregnancy follow the framework of a program developed by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

"As children travel along the cradle-to-career development path, they pass through several key transitions – the first of which is the transition from pre-school to kindergarten," said Yvonne Minor-Ragan, President of Buffalo Promise Neighborhood. "Our new center and the programs to be implemented through Early Foundations are intended to rally the community around the goal of preparing every young BPN child and family to successfully navigate through this critically important first transition."

Funding for the early childhood education center includes a \$1 million grant from the John R. Oishei Foundation with additional funding from M&T Bank. The center was designed by Watts Engineers and construction will be done by SLR Contracting.

About Buffalo Promise Neighborhood

Founded in 2010, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is a multi-stakeholder not-for-profit organization that seeks to improve performance at three schools on the northeast side of Buffalo – Bennett High School, Highgate Heights, and Westminster Community – and transform the surrounding community by providing a continuum of solutions to children and families, including neighborhood resources, streamlining family services and improving educational supports.

BPN is a unique public/private partnership that collaborates with a broad range of partners and service providers, including businesses, block clubs, non-profits, public entities and other organizations. BPN is supported through financial and human resources generously provided by M&T Bank as well as support through the Westminster Foundation. BPN also receives funding from U.S. Department of Education and the John R. Oishei Foundation. For more information, please visit www.buffalopromiseneighborhood.org.

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