

# Despite Funding Cutbacks, Hephzibah's Day Care Program Remains an Important Community Resource

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EACH YEAR, HEPHZIBAH'S DAY CARE PROGRAM SERVES MORE THAN 600 CHILDREN from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Our fees are assessed on a sliding scale to ensure every family in our community has access to quality day care — regardless of income.

Of the **600 children in our Day Care Program**, one-hundred and fifty to two hundred youngsters from struggling families have had their tuition underwritten in part by a substantial grant from **United Way**. This year United Way announced that they were changing the focus of their funding efforts and would no longer support the Program.

Fortunately the **Community Chest of Oak Park and River Forest** came through at the last minute with \$75,000 grant. The remaining gap was filled by a generous, one-time grant of \$25,000 from the **Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation**. We are incredibly grateful for their substantial contribution. Many Oak Park families are struggling economically and their children need a safe place to go after school. Supporting education is the best way to ensure a healthy and bright future for our community.

Unsupervised time after school hours poses a well known hazard for young people according to Hephzibah's Executive Director, Mary Anne Brown. The Day Care Program offers a safe, enriching after school environment for the younger children. Students who are in kindergarten through fifth grade learn about community resources for after school activities: information that is crucial when they graduate from the program and enter middle school. These lessons lay the foundation for habits that help boost academic achievement — a keystone for well adjusted young people and a healthier community.

Since 1974, Hephzibah has provided quality day care for children whose parents are working, going to school or completing career training. Today our nationally recognized, award-winning Day Care Program offers a nurturing, enriching and dynamic day care experience for all Oak Park children from kindergarten through 5th grade and full time during the summer months.

**If you would like to make a donation to support Day Care Tuition Relief for those who need it**, please contact Molly Philosophos, Director of Development at 708.649.7158 or [mphilosophos@hephzibahhome.org](mailto:mphilosophos@hephzibahhome.org). ♥



## Hephzibah welcomes CEDA Head Start!

ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2011, CHILD CARE WORKERS GREETED 34 CHILDREN for the first day of the **CEDA Head Start program** located at Hephzibah Home.

When CEDA Head Start needed a new Oak Park location, a concerned community member contacted Hephzibah's Executive Director, Mary Anne Brown, about possible locations for the program. Hephzibah had the space available since its kindergarten-aged day care program, which was once held at the 946 location, had relocated to the local elementary schools.

"It seemed that CEDA's goals matched our goals. The program was a perfect fit to take place here at Hephzibah," noted Mary Anne.

Long-time Hephzibah staff member, Melissa Smith, transitioned from her role as a Day Care Supervisor to the coordinator of the CEDA Headstart program.

When asked about her new role, Melissa said, "The children are awesome. And the curriculum for the program is incredibly strong and dynamic."

Since the start date, the children have eaten over 2,300 nutritious breakfasts and lunches served from Hephzibah's kitchen; they have exercised in our safe outdoor playground, created artwork in our Art Center and enacted dramas and vignettes in the Dramatic Play Area. Every day brings new discoveries, adventures and opportunities to learn & grow! ♥