



Riverbend Head Start & Family Services awarded \$200,000 for two Granite City centers

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GRANITE CITY — Riverbend Head Start & Family Services (RHSFS) was recently awarded **\$200,000** by the **United States Steel Corporation and SunCoke Energy Inc.** Funds will be utilized for renovations at the two Granite City Head Start Centers located at 1249 20th Street and 2413 Corporate Center Drive.

Renovations will be conducted in two phases, the first of which is currently underway. Each of the Granite City Head Start Centers will undergo high efficiency upgrades to the heating, venting and cooling systems including the replacement of eight furnaces and four outdoor condensing units. Work is taking place while Head Start students are on summer break. The first phase is projected for completion no later than August 5th, 2016 to ensure no classroom programs or activities are disrupted.

Remaining funds will later be applied to the replacement of doors and windows in each of the Granite City child development centers in phase two of the renovation efforts.

U.S. Steel and SunCoke created an environmental trust in support of local efforts to promote better air quality and energy efficiency. By awarding this grant to Riverbend Head Start, the initiative will provide approximately 400 babies, toddlers and preschoolers in Granite City a cleaner and healthier environment to grow and learn.

“This grant will allow our agency the opportunity to operate higher efficiency HVAC systems which will improve indoor air quality while reducing our energy use and costs. Savings will be redirected to operations that focus on educating children and empowering families,” said Riverbend Head Start & Family Services’ President and CEO, Chuck Parr.

In addition to building a healthier learning environment, the grant establishes an opportunity to educate Head Start children and their parents about the importance of air quality and energy efficiency. With childhood allergies and breathing conditions like asthma on the rise, it is increasingly important to talk to parents about ways to improve the environment in their own homes.

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services and the Piasa Palisades Group of the Sierra Club, who strongly advocated for the agency during the grant approval process, are collaborating on plans for an educational workshop to take place during the 2016-17 school year.

Virginia Woulfe-Beile, Three Rivers project coordinator for the Piasa Palisades Group of the Sierra Club, said “I appreciate the good work Riverbend Head Start & Family

Services does in in our community. It was a pleasure to champion the agency's grant proposal. I look forward to continuing our partnership and working with the Head Start students and their families this school year."

"The Sierra Club is pleased to work closely with the elected officials and community leaders in the Granite City, Madison and Venice municipalities to develop air quality improvement projects to be funded through the United States Steel and Gateway Energy Settlement Fund, which was negotiated by the Sierra Club and the American Bottom Conservancy for the improved health through better air quality for the citizens of the region," she said.

The Piasa Palisades Group of the Sierra Club has its headquarters in Alton. The Sierra Club is the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization and was founded in 1892.

Woulfe-Beile was part of a six-person committee that awarded the trust to Riverbend Head Start & Family Services. The others were Bryan Kresak, environmental director of Granite City Works; Jack Darin, director of the Illinois Chapter Sierra Club; Joyce Blumenshine, conservation committee chairperson of the Illinois Chapter Sierra Club; and Kathy Andria, Mark Feldworth and Dale Wojtkowski of American Bottom Conservancy.

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services currently operates six centers in Madison County and serves 850 at-risk children, ages birth to five. The mission is to empower those children and their families to develop positive skills to meet life's challenges.

The organization is primarily funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Additional community support is critical in achieving the goal of preparing impoverished children for success in kindergarten and throughout life.

To learn more about Riverbend Head Start & Family Services or the Piasa Palisades Group of the Sierra Club, please visit their websites at www.riverbendfamilies.org and www.sierraclub.org/illinois/piasa-palisades.