



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **LSSI's North Austin Head Start Hosts August 22 Fun Day/Open House to Celebrate New School Year**

On August 22, North Austin Head Start, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), will hold a Fun Day/Open House from noon until 3 p.m. The site is located at 1500 N. Mason Avenue, adjacent to North Austin Lutheran Church in Chicago.

The free event, which is open to the community as well as to the children who attend the Head Start program and their families, will feature the WGCI Van, along with one of their on-air personalities, an obstacle course set up by the Chicago Fire Department, games, face-painting and refreshments.

North Austin Head Start offers full-day and free half-day classes for children between 3 to 5 years old and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the Council on Accreditation (COA).

“North Austin Head Start is one of the best-kept secrets in the community,” says Carol Endemann, associate executive director of LSSI’s Head Start programs. “We adhere to strict Head Start standards and an official education curriculum. Our teachers do an outstanding job of preparing the children for kindergarten. Our commitment to early literacy is exemplified through our Bonding with Books program, a unique family literacy program that gives 10 free hardback books to each child, one per month from October to May.” North Austin has English- and Spanish-speaking teachers, and although the program began on August 10, Endemann says there are still spots available.

“I am one of the proud parents,” says Brigette Watson, whose 4-year-old son Pedro attends North Austin. “I am a working parent. I love the school, the staff and the teachers. My son, he learns so much — he knows all [the names of] the animals in books, dinosaurs, colors, ABCs and months of the year. The teachers are really good; they teach the kids really well. Pedro was glad to get back to school this year; he was happy to see his teachers again.”

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Last fall, the center was the recipient of a brand new playground, thanks to the Kohl Foundation and volunteers from Kohl’s stores and Children’s Memorial Hospital who helped to install new equipment, which included slides, a tire swing and a new playground surface. The \$78,000 renovation was funded by Kohl’s Cares for Kids, in collaboration with the Injury Prevention and Research Center at Children’s Memorial Hospital, which managed the project.

For many of the children, the playground at the site is the only one they have to explore, run and climb safely. The new playground is “important because it enables us to give the kids the physical activity they need,” says Doris Holden, site director. “In most classrooms, there’s no place for climbing, jumping, hopping or skipping — what we call large motor activities. The playground is a great place for that.” And the students are thrilled with their new playground, which was also re-landscaped by the volunteers who installed the playground.

LSSI’s North Austin Head Start program has served the community since 1982 and is one of five Head Start programs that LSSI offers in Chicago.

*For more information about North Austin Head Start, call Doris Holden, site director, at 773/237-1930. For more information about Lutheran Social Services of Illinois’ Head Start program, call Carol Endemann at 847/390-1494 or visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).*

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**About Lutheran Social Services of Illinois**

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LSSI’s services include foster care, adoption, pregnancy counseling, Head Start, child care services, services for at-risk families, residential services for youth, counseling, mental health, substance abuse treatment, residential programs for adults with developmental disabilities, housing and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, nursing care and rehabilitation, and programs for prisoners and their families. For more information on Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).