

CAPITAL AREA HEAD START OPENS PNC GROW UP GREAT® NATURE-BASED CLASSROOM

Preschool students at Capital Area Head Start's Granite Street Center in Harrisburg now have a new outdoor classroom

HARRISBURG, PA, UNITED STATES, April 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Preschool students at

[Capital Area Head Start's](#) Granite Street Center in Harrisburg now have a new outdoor classroom, made possible by a \$75,000 grant from PNC Foundation in support of PNC Grow Up Great, its high-quality early childhood education initiative,



Nature-based play encourages children to use all five senses to connect with the world around them"

Shawnee Hooper, executive director of Capital Area Head Start.

The nature-based classroom includes:

- A gardening area with planters suitable for cultivating and growing vegetables and flowers
- A gathering area for children and teachers to share their discoveries

- An area with logs that doubles as seating and a climbing area to help children develop gross motor skills
- A mud kitchen, water pump and troughs for classic measuring, mixing and building fun
- Art areas to provide a place to create nature-inspired art and music

The project to expand existing outdoor learning amenities at the Center is one of many such projects across the country funded by the PNC Foundation as part of its celebration of the 20th anniversary of PNC Grow Up Great.

"Creating spaces where children can learn and play outside makes a real difference," said Jim Hoehn, PNC regional president for Central Pennsylvania. "This project is a great way to celebrate the impact of PNC Grow Up Great and continue our long-standing partnership focused on supporting kids and families across Central Pennsylvania."

The new outdoor nature-based classroom at Granite Street Center will develop children's senses and help them learn about growing food, the cycles of life, respect for the environment, habitat, seasons and conservation.

"Nature-based play encourages children to use all five senses to connect with the world around

them,” said Shawnee Hooper, executive director of Capital Area Head Start. “Not only does it enhance their physical health and support STEM skills, but it creates opportunities for social interaction and collaboration. We are grateful to the PNC Foundation for funding the outdoor learning area. Their partnership over the past two decades has helped so many children in our region get a head start in life.”

PNC Grow Up Great has provided support for children and families within Capital Area Head Start since 2005, enhancing STEAM and literacy initiatives to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and in life.

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About the PNC Foundation

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. (NYSE: PNC), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The Foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through PNC Grow Up Great®, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual \$500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. For more information, visit <http://www.pncgrowupgreat.com>.

About Capital Area Head Start

Capital Area Head Start, a program of [Keystone Human Services](#), has been supporting children and families in Central Pennsylvania since 1988, giving children a head start in life, empowering parents, and strengthening families. Head Start pre-kindergarten programs are comprehensive, state- and federally-funded child development programs serving children 3-5. Early Head Start serves women who are pregnant and children ages birth to three.

About Keystone Human Services

[KHS](#) is a multi-national human services organization based in Harrisburg, PA. KHS operates in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, the Republic of Moldova, and India, providing advocacy, services, and supports in early childhood education and family support, mental health, autism, and intellectual, developmental, cognitive, and physical disability. We build communities where everyone can thrive, direct their own lives, establish homes, find meaningful work, pursue education alongside their peers, and fill valued roles in the community. In addition to operating as KHS, KHS provides services through Susquehanna Service Dogs (SSD), Capital Area Head Start (CAHS), Partnerships for People, Key Human Services, Keystone Moldova, and Keystone Institute India.

More information can be found at KHS.org and KeystoneMoldova.md

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