

Next Door Foundation Nominated as National Head Start Center of Excellence

December 2009 – The Milwaukee Next Door Foundation announced today that it has been nominated by Governor Jim Doyle for consideration as one of ten national Head Start Centers of Excellence.

Sponsored by the federal Office of Head Start, Centers of Excellence are programs of exceptional quality that will serve as national models of best practice. The Next Door Foundation will compete with top centers from around the country for a 5-year financial commitment from the Office of Head Start.

According to a letter from the governor informing the organization of the nomination, the Next Door Foundation was selected through a highly competitive process.

“We are honored to have been nominated for this opportunity,” said Carol Keintz, executive director. “The Next Door Foundation is committed to continuous improvement, enhancing student success in school, and fostering public and private partnerships. It is great to receive state recognition for our work.”

Founded in 1969, the Next Door Foundation serves more than 1,000 central city children and their parents annually, and is supported by community volunteers from the greater Milwaukee area. The agency relies on a combination of public and private funding and operates through the efforts of volunteers, partners, and its highly-trained and dedicated staff. We mention volunteers here twice – is there a problem with that?

Among the organization’s initiatives is the Educare Center of Milwaukee, a cutting-edge early childhood center that opened in September of 2005, serving 150 young children and their families. The center is the result of an innovative public-private collaboration between the Next Door Foundation, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, and others. It offers a high-quality, birth-to-five program that aims to achieve higher levels of learning and care through full-day, year-round programming.

The center is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and serves infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, allowing families to enroll more than one sibling at the same site. The families of children who are enrolled in the program work closely with Family Support Specialists, who have training and experience in human services and social work.

“Educare focuses on best practices and the science of development, brings families and communities together, and advocates for public and private partnerships,” said Carol Howard, site director. “This unique approach will allow us to highlight best practices, both statewide and on a national level.”

In addition to the Educare Center, the Next Door Foundation’s programs include Early Head Start, Head Start, Children’s Hospital Pediatric Clinic, Birth to Three services, several family literacy programs, an MPS charter school for four- and five-year-old kindergarteners, and an after-school program.

The selection of the ten national Centers of Excellence will be made in 2010.