PNC Foundation Announces $10.2 Million in Grants to Mark 20th Anniversary of PNC Grow Up Great®

Includes multi-year focus on outdoor learning for young children via play spaces, new Sesame Workshop resources, extended DonorsChoose support.

PITTSBURGH, April 4, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- The PNC Foundation today announced it is allocating a $5.2 million grant pool across its markets to implement or enhance high-quality, nature-based outdoor play and learning environments. This grant pool celebrates the 20th anniversary of PNC Grow Up Great®, PNC's $500 million, bilingual, signature philanthropic initiative designed to help prepare children from birth through age 5 for success in school and life.

Recent PNC-funded research by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) showed that 49% of children ages 3-5 are playing outside less than once a day. A recent NIEER literature review also suggests that pre-K programs conducted in nature-based settings can promote better learning and development.

"PNC has been in the early childhood education space for 20 years, focused on supporting the high-quality early education that is the foundation of a bright future for young children," said Sally McCrady, president and chair, PNC Foundation. "For the milestone anniversary of PNC Grow Up Great, we're thrilled to help provide young children across our communities with outdoor spaces that can help spark their natural sense of wonder and curiosity."

The nature-based play and learning environments will emphasize natural surroundings, sensory elements and interactive play areas where children can explore and discover. Additionally, many of the projects include professional development for teachers on nature-based curriculums and opportunities for family engagement. PNC markets will collaborate on the projects with one or more local early childhood education providers.

"A growing body of research suggests that encouraging children to engage with their world through nature during play, and more structured activities that incorporate the environment around them, offers a wealth of benefits for learning and development," said Steve Barnett, director of NIEER. "We're excited to see PNC help high-quality early education providers add this outdoor play and learning element to their programs. These natural play areas will plant the seeds for a lifetime of opportunities for pre-K students across PNC's footprint."

PNC Grow Up Great's focus on outdoor play and learning for the 20th anniversary extends beyond the grant pool initiative. The PNC Foundation today announced a $5 million extension of its support for DonorsChoose, an education nonprofit that connects individual donors with public school classrooms,

bringing PNC Foundation's total support of the organization to $20 million since 2017. The PNC Foundation this morning flash funded all pre-K and Head Start teacher requests focused on outdoor play and learning in PNC's markets and is currently matching, dollar for dollar, donations that support public and charter school pre-K and Head Start classrooms on DonorsChoose in the PNC footprint, with an extra boost for outdoor learning-themed requests. Matching donations are subject to qualifying project criteria and a maximum dollar amount. For more information, visit DonorsChoose.org/PNC.

In addition, earlier today, longtime collaborator Sesame Workshop, the global impact nonprofit behind *Sesame Street*, launched their latest set of bilingual educational resources. Created through support from the PNC Foundation and now available in PNC branches and online, the content emphasizes nature-based play with the theme of "Learn & Grow: Inside, Outside and On the Go."

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (www.pnc.com), 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.

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