'PNC Grow Up Great' Demonstration Project Grants Top $1.1 Million

Money Expands Development of High Quality Preschool Curriculum

Building on the success of its first year of grant giving, PNC Grow Up Great, The PNC Financial Services Group's investment in school readiness, recently awarded more than $700,000 in new grants to non-profit preschool centers in the company's eight-state region and Washington D.C.

The funding, which ranges from $25,000 - $50,000 based on the center's request, brings the total number of demonstration project grants to $1.1 million since the inception of PNC Grow Up Great last year. The PNC Foundation grants will be used to create and test new teaching practices and curriculum to improve the learning skills of the children at each preschool. These tools will then be presented to other early education centers as best practices in their respective areas of study.

"We believe that all children should have consistent access to high quality early education so that they are prepared for school regardless of where they live or what their parents can afford," said Eva Blum, director, PNC Grow Up Great. "These grants will help to build high quality preschool curriculum that will be shared with early childhood educators in our communities and beyond."

Of the 16 centers awarded grants, six are new to the program this year. Those recipients are: The Campagna Center, Alexandria, Va.; United Planning Organization, Washington, D.C.; Montgomery County Head Start, Silver Spring, Md.; Lynn Economic Opportunity Center, Lynn, Mass.; Burlington County Community Action Program, Burlington, N.J.; and Christiana Cultural Arts Center, Wilmington, Del.

Ten preschool centers received second-year grants based on their achievements, as well as projected outcomes of the new grant. The funds will help the centers continue to expand the tools they developed in 2004.

"Last year, we focused our PNC Grow Up Great grant on creating an enhanced science curriculum," said Susan Buffton, center director, Council of Three Rivers American Indian. "The results have been phenomenal -- in fact, our students have improved their proficiency scores by 16 percent. We look forward to continuing our success with this funding."

Second-year recipients include:

Kentucky
- Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville - Literacy

New Jersey
- Center for Family Resources, Ringwood - Language development

Ohio
- Arlitt Child and Family Research and Education Center, Cincinnati - Social/emotional development and literacy

Pennsylvania

- The YMCA of Philadelphia - Mathematics
- Chester County Intermediate Unit, Downingtown - Social/emotional development
- Council of Three Rivers Indian Center, Pittsburgh - Science
- University of Pittsburgh/Family Foundation, Pittsburgh - Language development
- Greater Erie Community Action Committee, Erie - Literacy
- Community Services for Children, Allentown - Creative Arts
- Capitol Area Head Start, Harrisburg - Social/emotional development

Grants for Great Hours

In addition to demonstration project grants, 14 grants have been given to preschool centers through PNC's unique Grants for Great Hours program, which began in March. The program recognizes PNC employees who volunteer 40 hours a year at one preschool by giving a $500.00 grant to that center.

PNC Grow Up Great is the PNC Financial Services Group's $100 million, 10- year investment in school readiness. As the largest initiative of its kind in the country, PNC Grow Up Great and its Spanish-language version, PNC Crezca con Exito, help families prepare their children for school and life. Supported by renowned education experts Sesame Workshop and Family Communications, Inc., the producers of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, the effort focuses on the early education of the whole child from birth to five, including their cognitive, social and emotional abilities.

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SOURCE: The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc.

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