

## Illinois Facilities Fund

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### Illinois Facilities Fund and Grand Victoria Foundation Award Childcare Classroom Improvement Grants at Lake County Press Conference

*Grants to improve early learning classrooms at five centers in Waukegan and North Chicago cities; additional community planning initiatives to strengthen overall Waukegan early childcare*

Waukegan, Illinois — At a press conference today at the Happy Day Nursery School in Waukegan, the Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF), a nonprofit corporation providing real estate financing, development and research for Illinois nonprofits, awarded grants to do designer “makeovers” of classrooms at Waukegan and North Chicago child care centers. The Fresh Spaces for Learning Places grants, part of IFF’s Building Blocks program, are funded by the Grand Victoria Foundation and bring vital private sector expertise to programs targeted at low-income families.

According to the recent IFF statewide early learning needs assessment, significant shortages of early childhood development services exist for working families throughout Illinois. Approximately half of Waukegan and North Chicago’s working families face a child care shortage, leaving more than 2,300 children without good options.

“Well-designed spaces help children learn better. With small, affordable changes and cosmetic improvements to existing facilities, we can make an enormous difference in the learning environment for both children and teachers,” said Jacques Sandberg, IFF Director of Community Planning. “Through better planning and coordination, we can help alleviate gaps in Lake County’s early childcare supply.”

The Fresh Spaces grants are one component of a larger community planning initiative to strengthen the early care and education system in Waukegan. IFF is also helping to organize a community work group comprised of private and public agencies in the Waukegan childcare sector to address childcare infrastructure and capacity needs. In addition, IFF is providing technical assistance directly to childcare agencies to help build organizational capacity.

The classroom improvement grants, Fresh Spaces for Learning Places, are part of IFF’s Building Blocks program, a five-year, \$3.4 million statewide effort to help Illinois communities improve the quality and availability of early childhood care. Building Blocks is providing community planning and management assistance, and bricks and mortar development in high-need communities throughout the state. Building Blocks is funded by a grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation.

The five centers receiving Fresh Spaces grants that were announced today include:

**Community Action Partnership of Lake County** – serves nearly 700 children aged three to five with all enrolled in Head Start programs. Fresh Spaces will make over four classrooms.

**Daisy's Resource and Development Center** – provides full-day/full-time and evening care for infants and toddlers, as well as vocational and GED training programs for adults; more than 85 percent enrolled in programs targeted to low-income children. Fresh Spaces will make over two classrooms in North Chicago.

**Happy Day Nursery School** – offers full-day/full-time care as well as before/after school care for children aged two through eleven. Nearly half of children are in programs targeted to low-income children. Fresh Spaces will make over four of the School's Waukegan classrooms.

**Lake County Family YMCA (Y-Pals Childcare and Learning Center)** – offers full-day/full-time care and specialized education programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start, with more than 90 percent of children aged three to four years of age enrolled in programs targeted to low-income. Fresh Spaces will make over two of the Waukegan classrooms.

**Little Bear Child Development Center** – serves children two to six years old with full-day/full-time care, with more than 70 percent of children enrolled in programs targeted to low-income. Fresh Spaces will make over four of the Waukegan classrooms.

“When you see a child walk into a beautiful learning space, their face lights up,” said Winifred Caraway, Executive Director, Happy Day Nursery School. “These grants from IFF and Grand Victoria Foundation will make an enormous difference in the lives of our children,” Caraway concluded.

#### **About Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF)**

Founded in 1990, the private nonprofit Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF) offers a range of financial and real estate resources to nonprofits serving low income and special needs communities throughout Illinois. Services offered include below-market lending, facilities planning, real estate development, management assistance and community planning. To date, the IFF has made more than 350 loans to 230 Illinois nonprofits and completed over 120 nonprofit real estate construction or renovation projects. To learn more about IFF, consult [www.iff.org](http://www.iff.org) or call 312.629.0060.

#### **About Grand Victoria Foundation (GVF)**

Grand Victoria Foundation (GVF) is an independent, private foundation that supports Illinois nonprofits in education, economic development and the environment. Established by Grand Victoria Casino, which contributes 12.5 percent of its annual net profit to the foundation, GVF also provides technical assistance and expertise to nonprofits to promote their long-term success.