

## **AAPAR and NASPE Win Major Head Start Grant**

In October, the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAR) and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) were awarded a \$12 million grant from the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to create Head Start Body Start: The National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play. This is AAHPERD's largest grant ever.

Daniel Schneider, J.D., Acting Assistant Secretary for ACF, announced the award October 6 at the 80<sup>th</sup> celebration of National Child Health Day. ACF is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The National Center is a key component of the Surgeon General's Childhood Overweight and Obesity Prevention Initiative.

The Center, to be headquartered at AAHPERD's Reston office, will provide a broad range of services aimed at increasing physical activity, outdoor play, and healthy eating among Head Start and Early Head Start children, families, and staff nationwide. The ultimate goal is to facilitate healthy development and reduce obesity among 900,000 Head Start children.

As required by the government's RFP, most of the funds (almost \$8 million) will be allocated for sub-grants of up to \$5,000 each for playground and outdoor play space improvement and construction at hundreds of Head Start Centers nationwide. Remaining funds will be used to provide research-based physical education and physical activity resources, training, and technical assistance to Head Start staff and families.

AAPAR and NASPE are equal partners on this project, and equally excited about the prospect of promoting physical development and outdoor play on a grand scale. The project will span four years, and should have a lasting impact on children nationwide.

The plan has three major components:

- Assist the Office of Head Start in setting national priorities and developing policies that facilitate increased activity among children at Head Start Centers.
- Train and support Head Start and Early Head Start staff in best practices that increase activity among Head Start children.
- Increase outdoor play at Head Start Centers by building and/or improving outdoor play areas and providing support for proper use of those areas.

To achieve these objectives, NASPE/AAPAR will be drawing on the expertise of an Advisory Board, creating and implementing a seven-part physical activity training for Head Start staff, deploying consultants to provide on-site assessments and recommendations, and evaluating success. The plan includes the creation of new resources such as blogs, webinars, and other direct and online services.

NASPE and AAPAR are uniquely qualified and positioned to create and oversee Head Start Body Start: The National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play. As national professional associations, both organizations have a proven track record of providing resources and trainings that are based on current research and best practices. They are committed to identifying and promoting a full range of high quality resources and partnerships in order to provide state-of-art information and service. As part of the AAHPERD Alliance, AAPAR and NASPE bring to the project not only a history of collaboration, but the potential for a strong and successful partnership that will, AAPAR and NASPE leaders hope, wildly exceed expectations.

A 16-member Advisory Board comprised of professionals from a range of cultural, linguistic, geographic, and economic backgrounds will provide guidance on the direction and progress of the project. NASPE and AAPAR members on the Advisory Board include: Melinda Bossenmeyer, Linda Carson, Jane Clark, Rhonda Clements, Diane Craft, Janet Fulton, and Marybeth Lima.

AAPAR/NASPE member Paul Wright of the University of Memphis will provide a full evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the Center's initiatives.

NASPE/AAPAR members Clersida Garcia, Meg Greiner, Kristi Mally, Rae Pica, and Steve Stork will serve as Master Trainers. Hundreds of other NASPE and AAPAR members will have opportunities to serve as consultants.

Speaking at the press conference, NASPE Executive Director Charlene Burgeson said, "NASPE and AAPAR are ready to mobilize and serve, and do our very best to help with the physical education of our nation's children. We are excited about increasing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of Head Start staff about facilitating physical activity, increasing daily activity levels and decreasing overweight and obesity among the children."

AAPAR Executive Director Mariah Burton Nelson added, "Through this partnership, almost a million children will receive not only a head start, but a "body start"; not only academic preparation but physical preparation. Our nationwide network of physical educators, playground specialists, safety and risk management experts, and program evaluators will not only help reduce obesity, but will help prepare children for a lifetime of health, fitness, and fun."

You'll be hearing much more about this exciting project as it develops over time!