



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

For information contact: Shawna Rhine, Community Outreach Coordinator/Public Information Officer
Southern 7 Health Department & Head Start

Office: 618-626-2355 Cell: 618-614-9223 Southern 7 Central Office: 618-634-2297 Email: srhine@s7hd.org

(10/8/23) - Southern 7 Celebrates October Head Start Awareness Month

It was President Ronald Reagan who first proclaimed October as Head Start Awareness Month on October 22, 1982. Since then Head Start teachers, parents and alumni have been engaging in meaningful activities to commemorate the impact of Head Start on our nation's children. Southern 7 Head Start (S7HS) will recognize this special observance at each of its centers this October.

Throughout the month, children and their families will participate in various activities, including learning the history of Head Start and how this free, kindergarten readiness program has changed the lives of more than 39 million children nationwide. Head Start is a federally funded, educational program for income eligible families that provides comprehensive services to children ages birth to five to prepare children and their families for kindergarten and beyond.

What began in 1964 under President Johnson, Head Start was created in 1965 as a child development program. It provides comprehensive child development services that foster children's growth in social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, and monitors their progress in these areas.

"We want people to know that Head Start is much more than day care", says Shawna Rhine, S7HS Community Outreach Coordinator. "In addition to Kindergarten readiness skills, children enrolled in the program receive health, dental and developmental screenings, participate in educational activities and socialization skills, and receive healthy meals and snacks. It's a well-rounded approach to early development that's beneficial to the whole family."

Families with children in Head Start have access to mental health services, parent engagement and training tools, services to children of all needs and abilities, and services available through Southern 7 Health Department including vaccinations, health screenings, and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Supplemental Nutrition Program. They are also invited to volunteer in the program and participate in Head Start Policy Council.

Southern 7 offers both Head Start and Early Head Start for income eligible families that live in the lower seven counties in Illinois. Head Start serves children age 3 to 5 and Early Head Start serves infants and children age 6 weeks to 3. Both programs offer full-day enrollment, with Early Head Start available year-round. A home-based option is available for families if requested. Head Start has dual enrollment with Pre-K.

For more information about Southern 7 Head Start, contact Sharity Gaddis at 618-634-2297 ex. 971127, visit www.southern7.org, or download the Southern 7 App.

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