

## MEDIA RELEASE

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**Source: Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph**

Stephanie Lux, Community Outreach Coordinator

(816) 233-8281, ext. 106;

[slux@endpov.com](mailto:slux@endpov.com)

[www.endpov.com](http://www.endpov.com)

### Community leaders make a difference one hour at a time



*Volunteers visit Head Start for a breakfast and literacy hour with low-income children*

*Left: Cameron Mayor Everett Ice reads to the children during Breakfast Club at the Cameron Head Start*

(Dec. 14, 2009—Cameron, MO) Wanted: Community and business leaders with an hour to

spare for low-income children. Bring a book, an appetite, and your knowledge.

One hour is all it takes to make an impression on low-income children enrolled in Cameron's Head Start program. And as a bonus, the children may make an impression on you.

Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph (CAP St. Joe) began the Breakfast Club in St. Joseph over a year ago as a way to bring community leaders and Head Start children together. Recently, the success of the program allowed it to expand into Plattsburg, Cameron, and Maysville.

A typical Breakfast Club experience lasts about an hour. The community or business member is given a tour of the Head Start center and learns about the tools used at Head Start, including curriculum, social skills training, and nutrition. Then the guest sits down with the children and enjoys a nutritious breakfast with them. Finally, the volunteer reads the children a book or two and answers a few questions.

The experience is educational for all involved:

The Breakfast Club means Head Start children have a chance to spend time with leaders in our community. The program also means children have an opportunity to sit, eat, and talk with adults, and be exposed to a range of professions. Head Start staff say the children use this opportunity to practice their formal situation skills.

“Having our Head Start children meet community leaders is deliberate and important,” says Rachel McCoy, Director of Fund Development at CAP and founder of Breakfast Club. “Meeting different people in the community is like planting seeds for success— it exposes the kids to the range of possibilities of work and community service at an early age, so that they understand how much choice is available to them.”

Breakfast Club participants often comment on how well-behaved the children are, how they know the rules and are able to serve themselves at the family-style meal. Additionally, community members learn about the Head Start program and many of the processes that make it work.

Cameron Mayor Everett Ice was glad to join Breakfast Club this month: “I really enjoyed the kids,” he said. “They were very respectful and attentive. I was amazed at what all they do.”

The breakfast served at Breakfast Club is the same breakfast that Head Start children already eat. All Head Start meals are served family style, and pre-approved by CAP’s Nutrition Coordinator to provide focused nutrition in kid-friendly meals. The meals provided are high in iron and vitamin A and E, nutrients that could be lacking in the diet of lower-income children. The menus themselves are important educational tools, explaining to the parents what nutrient is being focused on and why.

After breakfast, volunteers have an opportunity to sit down and read a book (or books) to the children. Guests often bring in a childhood favorite of their own. After the reading, a lively question/answer session inevitably arises from the students.

To participate in Breakfast Club, or for more information, contact Rachel McCoy at [rmccoy@endpov.com](mailto:rmccoy@endpov.com) or (816) 233-8281.

Head Start is a comprehensive early childhood learning program designed to give children in poverty (or who have disabilities) the same chance to succeed at school as children from non-low-income families. From nutritious meals to physical screenings, home visits, accredited curriculum and family opportunities for socialization and goal-setting, Head Start utilizes every opportunity to move families out of poverty and into economic stability. Community Action Partnership manages the Head Start program in Andrew, Buchanan, Clinton and DeKalb Counties, serving nearly 500 children from low-income families.

Community Action Partnership has provided programs to move low-income families out of poverty since 1965, serving nearly 16,000 people in poverty in Northwest Missouri. Head Start is one of the core programs managed by the agency. Additional services provided by Community Action Partnership to low-income families include utilities assistance, affordable housing, financial literacy and home ownership classes, life skills and workforce training. For more information, visit [www.endpov.com](http://www.endpov.com).

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