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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sherry Locke, Director of Advancement

(207) 554-4130

slocke@acap-me.org

ACAP and Local Public Schools to Host Open Classroom Days to Share Innovative New Partnerships that Provide Full Day Care for Area Preschoolers with Community

Aroostook County – At a time of critical shortage of available childcare options for parents across the region, state and nation, unique partnerships between several area school districts and Aroostook County Action Program are making a difference locally.

This fall, ACAP doubled its number of public pre-school partnerships in communities across The County, adding Caribou, Limestone, Van Buren and Fort Kent to the list of towns where parents enrolling their children in preschool now have expanded opportunities. Partnership programs for expanded preschool/childcare services were already in place with RSU 50 in Dyer Brook, SAD 27 in Houlton, Region 2 School of Applied Technology – also in Houlton, as well as SAD 1 and the district’s Presque Isle Tech Center.

Beginning this week, the agency, which provides Head Start services region-wide, and its new partner public schools are inviting elected officials, community leaders, the media and community members in to visit the classrooms and learn more about the collaborative efforts that have been tailored to best meet the needs of the local community and school district.

The first of the open classroom events, co-hosted by ACAP and SAD 27, is set for this Thursday, September 15, between 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. at ACAP’s Early Care and Education Center at 40 Alfalfa Avenue in Fort Kent. It will be followed next month by similar open classroom events on October 18, between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m., co-hosted by ACAP and RSU 39, at ACAP’s Early Care and Education Center at 17 Bowles Road in Caribou; on October 20, between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., co-hosted by ACAP and the Limestone Community School, at the school at 93 High Street in Limestone; and lastly on October 25 between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., co-hosted by ACAP and SAD 24, at the Van Buren District School at 169 Main Street.

Aroostook County Action Program

PO.Box 1116
Presque Isle, ME
04769

P: 207-764-3721
F: 207-768-3022
www.acap-me.org



ACAP approaches preschool partnership as it approaches working with children, individualized to meet the specific and individual needs of the parties involved. The agency delivers a uniform service delivery to all children enrolled in the partnership classroom.

SAD 27, as well as the other Valley Unified Schools – SAD 33 in Frenchville/St. Agatha and the Madawaska School Department – are operating a partnership model in the 22-23 school year. A partnership classroom, located at the ACAP Early Care and Education Center in Fort Kent, delivers full day/full week services to district four-year-olds. In addition, ACAP has developed a three-year-old classroom to serve Head Start eligible three-year-old children at the same center. Both classrooms will operate on a full school day schedule, 5 days a week. In addition, parents needing extended day service will have the option to enroll in childcare wrap around services.

Additionally, ACAP is collaborating with the Valley Unified licensed childcare center to enroll four Early Head Start eligible children in the full working day child care program at the SAD 27 early learning center. This Early Head Start extension brings services, previously only available in this community through Home-Based, into a full day, center based option. In this model, ACAP collaborates with the early learning center to recruit families needing comprehensive family services. ACAP provides family coaching, parent engagement and education, health screening and support, research-based curriculum and assessment, including social/emotional supports.

RSU 39 in Caribou is operating in a partnership model similar to the Valley Unified Schools beginning with the 22-23 school year. Children enrolled will attend a full school day preschool classroom at ACAP's Caribou Early Education Center with the option of parents accessing full workday childcare. All four-year-old students are RSU 39 students; if they are also Head Start eligible, they are dually enrolled in both programs. ACAP provides special education classroom for RSU 39 students at ACAP's facility and is responsible for all special service delivery, IEP data collection, and qualified staff.

Limestone Community School (LCS) is a Maine Preschool Expansion Grant funded project that started with the 22-23 school year. This project expands the half-day preschool program in Limestone to a full-school-day classroom. Students, who are four-years-old and Head Start eligible, are dually enrolled in Head Start and public school preschool. A co-teacher teaching model is being used, with one teacher ACAP funded by Head Start and one teacher from Limestone funded by LCS.

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SAD 24 in Van Buren operates a full-day preschool classroom for four-year-old children in Van Buren. At the beginning of the 22-23 school year, ACAP opened a 3-year-old Head Start classroom in the elementary school wing. This provides an opportunity for younger preschoolers in the community to have two years of preschool experience. ACAP is providing the teacher and ed tech for the three-year-old classroom.

ACAP Head Start is able to bring additional benefits to preschool partnerships. Some of those benefits are: developmentally appropriate curriculum and support for curriculum delivery, assessment, developmental and sensory screenings, Practice Based Coaching for classroom teams, mental health support to staff, parents and children; also additional ACAP program supports through SNAP-ED nutrition curriculum, 5-2-1-0 Let's GO! physical activity and healthy lifestyle curriculum, Oral Health screenings and preventative care, and Whole Family Coaches.

Whole Family Coaches approach family engagement and work with all families enrolled to reach goals and see full potential in pathways to employment, training, health/behavioral health supports, building financial assets, developing social capital and support early childhood learning and development.

About Aroostook County Action Program

Celebrating 50 years of service to the people of northern Maine in 2022, Aroostook County Action Program provides the people of Aroostook County with services and resources that help individuals and families achieve greater economic independence. As a leader, or in partnership with others, ACAP provides guidance to the community in responding to emerging human needs in the areas of community health, early care and education, energy and housing, and workforce development services. Aroostook County Action Program continues to accept new clients as well as serve existing clients through a vast array of programming. To learn more about available services available, contact ACAP at 207- 764-3721.

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