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PILGRIM COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL EARNS NATIONAL NAEYC ACCREDITATION

Program Among First in Nation to Complete More Rigorous Accreditation Process

Oak Park, Illinois, September 1, 2007 – Pilgrim Community Nursery School, located in Oak Park, is one of the first early childhood programs to earn accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) – the nation’s leading organization of early childhood professionals.

“We’re proud to have earned the mark of quality from NAEYC, and to be recognized for our commitment to reaching the highest professional standards in Early Childhood Education,” said Ruth Martin, Director of Pilgrim Community Nursery School. “NAEYC Accreditation lets families in our community know that children in our program are getting the best care and early learning experiences possible.” Pilgrim Community Nursery School, located at 460 Lake Street in Oak Park within the Pilgrim Congregational Church buildings, is a nonprofit, nonsectarian preschool serving the community of Oak Park, Illinois and surrounding communities. It has been welcoming children of all races, religions, ethnic backgrounds and economic situations for the past 42 years and continues to offer developmentally-appropriate early childhood education for 140 three to five-year-olds in ten classrooms. At Pilgrim Community Nursery School, the staff strives to stimulate the balanced growth of a child: physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. It believes that each child has a unique rate of development, which should not be hurried or forced. Different levels of development and ability are expected, valued and accepted at the school. “Play is a crucial part of the early childhood learning experience and is reflected in our daily schedule,” said Martin. “Children learn by doing, imitating, experimenting and questioning.” More information on the school’s philosophy and history can be found at www.pilgrimschool.net.

To earn NAEYC Accreditation in the new system, Pilgrim Community Nursery School went through an extensive self-study process, measuring the program and its services against the ten new NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and more than 400 related Accreditation Criteria. The program received NAEYC Accreditation after an on-site visit by NAEYC Assessors to ensure that the program meets each of the ten NAEYC program standards. NAEYC-accredited programs are also subject to unannounced visits during their accreditation, which lasts for five years.

In the 20 years since NAEYC Accreditation was established, it has become a widely recognized sign of high-quality early childhood education. More than 11,000 programs, serving one million young children, are currently accredited by NAEYC – approximately 8 percent of all preschools and other early childhood programs. “The new NAEYC Accreditation system raises the bar for preschools, child care centers and other early childhood programs,” said Mark Ginsberg, Ph.D., executive director of NAEYC.

“Pilgrim Community Nursery School’s NAEYC Accreditation is a sign that they are a leader in a national effort to invest in high-quality early childhood education, and to help give all children a better start.”

The NAEYC Accreditation system was created in 1985 to set professional standards for early childhood education, and to help families identify high-quality preschools, child care centers and other early education programs. As of September 2006, the Association’s revised program standards and criteria have introduced a new level of quality, accountability, and service for parents and children in child care programs. To earn NAEYC Accreditation, a program must meet each of the ten NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards. The new standards reflect the latest research and best practices in early childhood education and development. NAEYC is committed to utilizing the newest studies and analysis on positive child outcomes to ensure young children continue receiving the highest-quality care and education possible.

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