

Buffalo Promise Neighborhood to Build Second Children's Academy on Buffalo's East Side

\$1.6 Million Investment to Create 'Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Children's Academy at Gerard Place'

BUFFALO, N.Y.—Buffalo Promise Neighborhood (BPN) today announced it will open a second educationally focused pre-school for children six-weeks to school-age in the Gerard Place Community Center.

M&T Bank, which leads the multi-stakeholder not-for-profit BPN, will invest approximately \$1.6 million to renovate the first floor of a building on the Gerard Place campus to serve as the 'Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Children's Academy at Gerard Place.' Work is expected to begin in July, with the goal of opening in the first half of 2018.

"This new Children's Academy will empower the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood to make an impact in the lives of more children and families in the community we serve," said BPN COO and Senior Director of Programs, Glenn Jackson. "Transforming an economically challenged neighborhood into one that can prosper begins by providing children with the opportunity to be successful in school. With this second academy, we'll be able to provide care and strong academic offerings to twice as many children."

Approximately 100 children will be able to attend the new Children's Academy, including those who live within the BPN service area, have siblings who attend one of the BPN schools or if their parents are residents of Gerard Place. The original Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Children's Academy, which opened in late 2013 at 3149 Bailey Avenue, currently serves 130 children. Both facilities will offer educational programming managed by EduKids.

"M&T Bank and Gerard Place have worked for years to help improve the lives of families in our community," said Gerard Place Executive Director David Zapfel. "Together, we will expand our impact on families in Buffalo and Western New York."

Gerard Place bought the two-story, 30,000-square-foot facility at 2515 Bailey Avenue, of which BPN will occupy the first floor, in 2011 with plans to create a community center. An estimated \$3.5 million is needed to fully renovate the gymnasium and second floor, which will hold adult education programs for the community. Gerard Place is in the process of a capital campaign to raise the additional funds.

"Gerard Place is very happy to partner with Buffalo Promise Neighborhood," added Zapfel. "Hundreds of lives are changed every day at Gerard Place. As part of the Gerard Place Community Center, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Children's Academy will enable us to support entire families as they work to get themselves out of poverty."

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Children's Academy at Gerard Place is the latest addition in a \$50 million, public-private partnership led by M&T Bank to provide a life-changing continuum of "cradle-to-career" services to neighborhood children. The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood includes Westminster Community Charter School, Highgate Heights Elementary School and the BPN Children's Academy.

M&T Bank began its involvement in the neighborhood in the early 1990s when the Buffalo-based bank adopted one of the city's lowest performing schools. Looking to build upon the success at Westminster Community Charter School, M&T Bank led an effort in 2012 to bring the national Promise Neighborhood model to Buffalo.

About Buffalo Promise Neighborhood

Founded in 2010, Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is a multi-stakeholder, not-for-profit organization that seeks to improve performance at three schools on the northeast side of Buffalo – Westminster Community Charter School, Highgate Heights Elementary, and Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Children's Academy – and transform the surrounding community by providing a continuum of solutions to children and families, including neighborhood resources, streamlining family services and improving educational supports. For more information, visit buffalopromiseneighborhood.org.

About M&T Bank

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About Gerard Place

Gerard Place officially opened its doors in 2000. They provide housing for homeless families, community education and supportive services to the Bailey/Delavan community. For more information, visit gerardplace.org. In 2009, Gerard Place opened a community education building that provides High School Equivalency (HSE) and literacy classes, as well as job readiness training, computer classes and health and nutrition classes. For more information, visit gerardplace.org.

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