

## Early Childhood Education

At our Northside Early Childhood Education Center we serve 125 children six-weeks of age to four years old. In December, we received the highest grading from United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County, the first Y program to receive this grade in the past seven years. In January, in collaboration with a Medical College of Wisconsin faculty member, we received a REDIRECT pilot grant from the Healthy Wisconsin Partnership Program to pilot a study to test the impact of introducing natural elements in the play environment of urban preschoolers to determine if changes occur in their ability to interact with nature and if that contact leads to greater resiliency and social-emotional growth. And earlier this month, the program was reauthorized as a National Accreditation Commission (NAC) center with no improvement plan needed after a lengthy process that included written components, evaluation analysis, and an on-site visit from NAC officials.

Also, this month, Northwestern Mutual Foundation committed \$50,000 in continued funding through their efforts to raise third grade reading scores in targeted neighborhoods. The Y's ECE program has retained its five-star YoungStar rating from the State and is looking to actively expand to fill unmet needs in underserved areas of our community including downtown. Talks with several partners have moved into the final stages and hopefully will result in signed MOU's in the very near future.