

Hinchey Worked Directly with Department of Agriculture to Obtain \$27,300 Grant

Monticello, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that Sullivan County Head Start has been awarded a \$27,300 community facility grant from the United State's Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development program. The funds will be used to install a new, energy efficient propane heating system at the Head Start facility located on Waverly Avenue in Monticello. The current heating system has a history of repeated failures, which has increased repair costs for the Head Start program and forced local families to find child care or miss work when classes are canceled due to heating system breakdowns. Hinchey contacted the USDA directly to highlight and stress the need for this grant. The Head Start grant application also received preferential treatment because Hinchey secured a USDA Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zone designation for Sullivan County in 1999. The federal funds will cover more than half of the total cost of the system installation.

"When the heating system at the Sullivan County Head Start center fails, children lose out on an important day of learning and families struggle to find childcare they can trust," said Hinchey. "There isn't any reason why this added burden on hard working families should be allowed to continue. After learning of the problem during my visit to a Sullivan County Head Start classroom in March, I worked directly with the USDA to secure the resources needed to repair the heating system. I'm happy that the problem will be corrected before this winter. This essential educational program has helped thousands of kids enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed, and these funds will the program even stronger."

Bertha Williams, Executive Director of Sullivan County Head Start welcomed the grant, "We serve 171 children and their families at this center. When the heating system is not working or in need of repair, we cannot have children in attendance and are forced to cancel school. These closures cause a hardship on our families that have to find child care or miss work."

Since its creation in 1965, Head Start programs have served over 27 million children. In March, Hinchey read to children at a Sullivan County Head Start classroom after touring the facility in Woodbourne, New York. The program enrolls 361 children and employs 87 full time staffers at two locations in Monticello and Woodbourne.