

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May Day, May Day, May Day! YMCA Child Development Center and Porter Hills Retirement Communities To Dedicate New Playground at Porter Hills Village

Generations Child Development Center at Porter Hills Village Continues to Work Toward Bringing Together the Young and the Seniors

Grand Rapids, Mich., April 30, 2008 - On Thursday, May 1, 2008 at 5:30 p.m., representatives from Generations Child Development Center, YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids, and Porter Hills Retirement Communities will converge on the grounds of **Porter Hills Village** to dedicate a new playground for the children of the already existing Generations Child Development Center facility. Because of the unique intergenerational component, the facility has won many awards, including a Governor's Choice Award, the best Child Care Center in the community, and was the first of the YMCA's centers to receive the nationally recognized National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation.

"We are so excited about the playground being built and the additional opportunities for the residents of Porter Hills Village to interact with the children of Generations," said Kristine VanVonderen, Executive Director of the Gainey Family YMCA. "Experts in the area of Aging and the Elderly highly regard this type of intergenerational programming and activities as improving the quality of life for seniors and the YMCA is pleased that this partnership continues to grow."

Since 1992, Generations Child Development Center, a YMCA-operated facility located on the campus of Porter Hills Village, has been providing quality child care to the greater Grand Rapids community. The distinctive aspect of integrating children in an environment inhabited with seniors is part of a national trend to address the three plagues of nursing homes and senior communities that account for the bulk of suffering among our elders: loneliness, helplessness, and boredom.

"Porter Hills Retirement Communities is committed to the innovation that lends itself to the philosophy of intergenerational care and the core belief that aging should be a continued stage of development and growth, rather than a period of decline," said Larry Yachcik, President/CEO of Porter Hills Retirement Communities. "The dedication of this playground validates just how important Generations Child Development Center is to Porter Hills Village. This partnership with the YMCA that has been in existence for 16 years is extremely valuable to our residents, and to our community."

Along with the dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony, there will be a “May Pole” dance performance by children from Generations in celebration of May Day.

The media is invited to attend and pre-event interviews with YMCA and Porter Hills Retirement Communities spokespersons can be arranged by contacting Joe Jones @ 340.1014 or jones@emilestone.com.

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Playground at Porter Hills is for the young and old

Friday, May 02, 2008

By Erin Albanese

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS TOWNSHIP -- "Grandma Kay, Grandma Kay, these are for you!" said Hunter Riedy, 4, presenting Kay Kretzschmer with a paper bouquet and a grin. She is one of his many "grandmothers" at Porter Hills Village.

Kretzschmer, 73, leaned over to speak with Hunter about swimming together in the retirement community pool.

Hunter noticed something different about her out of the water.

"You have glasses on," he said.

"That's right, I have my glasses on now," she said, laughing.

The conversation is typical at Porter Hills, 3600 E. Fulton St., where seniors are part of the everyday lives of children at the campus' Generations Child Development Center.

Each day, children visit residents, toting games and puzzles, and residents stop by the center to observe the bursting toddler energy. Outside, they visit at the gazebo or even throw a fishing line in the pond together.

On Thursday, residents watched the children dance around a Maypole in dedication of their new playground, funded by a \$65,000 gift from an anonymous donor.

The playground will provide even more opportunities for interaction.

"Sometimes, that simple interaction provides a bright spot in their lives," said Kristine Van Vonderen, executive director for the Gainey YMCA, who oversees the child-care center for newborns to 5-year-olds.

The 16-year partnership between YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids and Porter Hills has brought residents great joy, helping to sharpen

minds and bring a feeling of value, she said.

"For the kids, it provides additional caring mentors and role models in their lives," Van Vonderen said. "It provides that grandparent component for kids who may not have grandparents in the area."

Resident Pat Drost visits Generations on Thursdays to read stories and rock babies. She eagerly opened her bookcase to reveal her collection of stories, classics such as "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" and "Nurse Nancy."

"I've got some of the storybooks I read to my kids," she said Thursday. The inside covers were signed in pencil by her children in the 1950s.

Porter Hills Executive Director Beth Ann Brehm said the interaction adds another dimension to life for residents.

"It enriches the community," she said.

And the children gain a perspective on the elderly.

"The grandpas and grandmas have a lot to offer in terms of teaching them things," Brehm said.

"It's fun to watch them grow," resident Alma Mills said. "So many times, people our age can't be in a community where there are little ones."