



This month read a letter from **Middle Kentucky Head Start Center**. Their exciting play space make-over has given the center a new bounce of energy. The Climbing Summit is a favorite amongst the children, but the other equipment has not gone unnoticed.

"Dear Head Start Body Start,

First of all I would like to thank Head Start Body Start for their efforts to help the Head Start community provide wonderful outdoor experiences for the children. The children were anticipating exploring the equipment as they watched patiently each day the maintenance crew worked to assemble and install each piece. As we had expected, the Climbing Summit is a favorite with the children. They get to experience rock climbing at their center as if they were at our local State Park, Natural Bridge where rock climbing is a very popular attraction. This piece of equipment allows the children to build balance, upper body strength and to satisfy their natural urge for climbing, it a "kid thing". The new Naturally Playful Clubhouse Climber is often a place the children gather to build friendships and make plans for imaginary play. The stationary sand and water table expands their imagination, encourages tactile and sensory discovery and introduces them to the properties of sand and water.

Also with this experience children develop pre-math concepts such as; measuring, weighing, heavy/ light, more/ less, along with communication and social skills. The water element encourages them to explore the concepts of sink or float, measuring and pouring and to even discuss the uses for water in our world and the importance of maintaining clean water for our use. The four seat teeter totter helps children build balance, coordination, team cooperation, and strengthens their entire body.

The teachers facilitate discussions about physical outdoor activities such as camping, swimming, fishing and rock climbing which are great ways to enjoy our outside environment while staying physically fit. The new equipment we purchased with HSBS grant money is providing additional opportunities for the children to get the recommended one hour a day moderate to vigorous physical activity, as the teachers set up obstacle courses that move the children through, over and around the different play structures.

As a result of children's lifestyle today, childhood obesity is a major issue in our country. Ms. Michelle Obama has started a Let's Move initiative challenging everyone to get up and move. According to the 2000 census, the percentage of obesity in low income preschool children in the counties we serve was, Breathitt @ 18.6%, Lee @ 10.1% and Wolfe @ 18.5%. Those statistics from ten years ago were staggering, and we must work as a nation of parents, child care providers, educators, and health care providers to change this obesity epidemic in our young children. To sum it all up, the equipment that we purchased through HSBS encourages children to enjoy and appreciate being physically active during outdoor play and this is certainly a necessary early intervention to combat childhood obesity.

Kim Dunaway ~ DS/MH/CACFP/Nutrition Mgr."

