

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Health Department Kicks Off Global Youth Service Day With Launch of City Gardening Project

BALTIMORE, MD – (April 24, 2009) – The Baltimore City Health Department, in partnership with the Baltimore City Public School System, launched the *Gardening Project: Growing Healthy Habits in Baltimore's Children* at Harford Heights Elementary School. This event was held in honor of Global Youth Service Day, an annual event aimed at focusing the world's attention on what young people are doing to improve their communities.

Funded through a Youth Service America UnitedHealth HEROES Service-Learning Grant, the Gardening Project: Growing Healthy Habits in Baltimore's Children, seeks to address the issue of obesity in children at Harford Heights Elementary School. Harford Heights Elementary is located in Greenmount East and Clifton/Berea, two underserved neighborhoods in Baltimore. According to their body mass index calculations, twelve percent of this elementary school population has been identified as being obese or overweight.

"Childhood obesity is a public health challenge that continues to plague communities throughout Baltimore," said Interim Commissioner Olivia Farrow. "By educating these young people early about healthy eating habits and encouraging improved fitness, we have the ability to reach entire communities, engaging them in developing solutions to this widespread problem."

Under the Gardening Project, an indoor community garden has been established at the Harford Heights Elementary School. Two of the school's fourth grade classes are leading this project, and each student will plant a pot of herb or vegetable seeds of his or her choice. The project will include participation by the school physical education teacher, cafeteria workers, PTA members, parents and community members, and art and science teachers, who will engage the students and volunteers in cross-curricular activities.

For more information about this and other Health Department programs, please visit the Department's website: [www.baltimorehealth.org](http://www.baltimorehealth.org).

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