

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Jewish Community Centers setting new standard in early education**

*Evanston, IL, October 23, 2008* – A new standard in early childhood education is being set by preschoolers and teachers at Jewish Community Centers (JCC) of Chicago with the research-based *InvestiGator Club™ Prekindergarten Learning System*. Preschoolers in fifteen JCC classrooms in the Chicago area are beginning the year with an engaging cast of animal investigators, led by Dilly Gator and her friends. Curious young learners will accompany the characters through a series of adventures and investigations that connect to their own experiences and exploration of the world around them.

Robert-Leslie Publishing, an Evanston-based company, created the inquiry-based learning system to meet the need for a highly effective and developmentally appropriate curriculum to prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. The program is based upon scientific research into successful teaching practices and the long-term dramatic impact of a quality pre-K education on the lives of young children, their families, and their communities.

In 2006, selected preschools of Jewish Community Centers (JCC) of Chicago participated in the pilot testing of the program, incorporating *The InvestiGator Club™* into the JCC Early Childhood Education curriculum, which immerses children in learning alongside Jewish values development. The yearlong pilot study of the curriculum's effectiveness was conducted by the Educational Research Institute of America (ERIA) and included over 500 children nationwide. The independent study demonstrated that the program produces significant improvement in academic and social-emotional development in every demographic group.

Children are taught essential readiness skills and are also encouraged to experiment, build structures, appreciate fine art, sing and dance, and engage in dramatic play. One of the authors, well-known early childhood expert Beth Alley Wise, describes the program in this way: "Steeped in story that is both meaningful and inspirational, the characters help children connect to the world. Children learn values, solve problems, think like a scientist, face challenges, and develop their own sense of self."

"The characters really draw the children in, and their excitement is enhanced by the characters," confirms Jennifer Ricciotti, a teacher at Mayer Kaplan JCC Children's Center in Skokie. "When the children identify with a character's traits, it helps build a connection to learning."

Sue Banion, another teacher at Mayer Kaplan has seen the benefits of the program's interactive storytelling features and innovative teaching tools, "You can hear, see, and touch. That makes it come alive. The children's interest in learning has grown."

Since its debut in 2006, *The InvestiGator Club* has become the premier core curriculum for Head Start, private, and public pre-K classrooms determined to provide a comprehensive education in all domains of learning. A growing roster of early childhood specialists endorse the program based on the substantial research base and proven results. The program is 100 percent aligned with the stated principles of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Thousands of preschoolers nationwide are achieving remarkable success with the learning system, including children in over 100 schools in the Chicago area.

### **About Robert-Leslie Publishing, The Early Childhood Company™**

Robert-Leslie Publishing is focused on the principle that the early years are the most valuable time to build a child's foundation for a lifetime of success. The company's mission is to help all young children succeed by learning about the world and their place - in it through the publication of effective, developmentally appropriate learning materials for children, teachers, and families. The company's founders, with more than thirty years of early childhood publishing experience, have surrounded themselves with a team of leading early childhood experts, authors, and school faculty to help accomplish these goals. Founder Judi Coffey and *InvestiGator Club* authors, Beth Alley Wise and Joellyn Ciccirelli, are available for interviews.

### **About the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago**

JCC of Chicago has been serving the greater Chicago community for over 100 years. Founded in 1903 to serve the Chicago area's growing Jewish population, the organization is nationally recognized for its wide array of high-quality, innovative programs and services. Across fifteen early childhood learning centers, seven full-service community centers, and many off-site satellite locations, the agency has expanded to offer a vast range of activities to people of all ages, ethnicities, and faiths across Chicagoland.

For more information about *The InvestiGator Club* and Robert-Leslie Publishing, visit [www.investigatoreclub.com](http://www.investigatoreclub.com) or phone 1-888-345-PREK (7735).

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