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Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago Opens First-Ever Therapeutic School and Center for Autism Research in Chicago Official Ribbon-Cutting Event to Take Place October 3rd

Chicago, August 2008 – Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago recently opened the nation first-ever, state-of-the-art Therapeutic School and Center for Autism Research at 1939 West 13th Street. Working in close partnership with the College of Medicine at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the new facility will benefit Chicago-area children living with Autism – and will be the first to integrate education, cutting-edge research, training and independent living in a single campus facility. The official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new school will take place October 3rd.

The \$32,000,000 Center is scheduled to be completed in four phases. Phase one, which opened in mid-July, includes a 45,000 square-foot two-story therapeutic day school for 150 children, a state-of-the-art research facility, and baseball field and fitness center. Upon completion, the center will boast two residential buildings, and a gymnasium and pool.

"Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago has been a leader in providing services for children living with autism and other disabilities for years—giving families the help they need today to live better, more independent lives," said Dr. Stephen Porges, Director of the Brain-Body Center and Professor of Psychiatry, University of Illinois at Chicago. "Not only will the new school enrich the lives of so many Chicago families, but it will provide the scientific community with an opportunity to develop and test new treatments that will benefit individuals living with Autism Spectrum Disorders across the country."

One of the first schools in the nation to be designed from the ground up to meet the very specific needs of children with autism, the following are just a few examples of the school's extraordinary features:

- Simulated living environments that provide early intervention, education, and research all on one campus

- Flexible classroom modules that allow teachers to customize equipment and furniture setup for individual student needs
- Observation rooms, monitors and customized coated windows that allow teachers and researchers to unobtrusively observe students in their daily activities and evaluate successful teaching approaches
- Vocational Training Center where older students learn work skills and routines to facilitate transition from school to workplace
- Specially designed carpeting, ceiling tile and non-glare painted walls that provide a quiet and calming environment
- Classrooms designed to reduce background noises that often distract autistic students
- Classrooms designed to maximize natural light, while using specialized lighting that reduces distracting glare, shadows and fixture "hum".

The Chicago City Council initially approved an ordinance introduced by Mayor Daley to donate the vacant 3.4 acre parcel of land (valued at \$3.5 million) for the construction of the new facility. Speaker Madigan secured a \$4 million grant for the new school, and Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich also demonstrated his commitment to the project and to supporting education and research for autism with a \$1 million grant.

About Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago

Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago provides comprehensive services for individuals with disabilities or special needs and their families to improve quality of life and maximize independence. The organization offers a wide range of programs; some of which include: specialized therapeutic schools for children with autism, emotional behavior disorder, and/or severe learning disabilities; early intervention; occupational, physical and speech therapies; inclusive child care; specialty clinics; adult job training and job placement programs; inclusive daycare and after school and outreach programs. For more information, visit www.eastersealschicago.org

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