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**CHICAGO BEARS AND PNC VOLUNTEERS TEAM UP TO INSTALL NEW  
PLAYGROUND AT CHICAGO COMMONS HUMBOLDT PARK NIA FAMILY CENTER**

*Expanded, interactive play area to boost experiential learning for infants, preschoolers*

CHICAGO, Oct. 28, 2019 – The Chicago Bears and PNC teamed up to install a bigger outdoor play and learning space for infants and preschoolers at Chicago Commons Nia Family Center in Humboldt Park. More than 30 volunteers, including Bears Chairman George H. McCaskey and 2019 rookies, helped build a mini football turf field, install new play area equipment, plant shrubs, help with beautification and add other nature-based elements to boost experiential learning.

“PNC recognizes that high-quality early education and access to resources is essential for a child’s long-term success in school and life,” Scott Swanson, PNC regional president for Illinois. “Now, the preschoolers will have more than a half acre of new, expanded outdoor space to help enhance their motor-skills and sensory learning through a mix of unique play structures and interactive stations.”

Chicago Commons, a PNC Grow Up Great® supported agency, is a leading provider of year-round high-quality, comprehensive early education from birth to age five for low-income families in four underserved Chicago neighborhoods and 10 community partner programs.

Restoration of the Nia Center play area was made possible by grants provided by the State of Illinois, City of Chicago, PNC Foundation, Chicago Bears, Bears Care, F.B. Hubachek, Jr. Trust, Peter Dodge Horne, and Frances Thorne Horne. This is the second playground PNC and the Bears have restored at a high-quality early education center in Chicago.

“The Chicago Bears and Bears Care are excited to be partnering again with PNC Bank to bring a wonderful new playground to life in Humboldt Park,” said Bears Director of Community & Alumni Relations Matt Simeone. “The new mini turf football field will provide a great space for these young learners to be active and hone new skills, including the importance of team-building.”

Chicago Bears rookies joined McCaskey, Swanson, Bears and PNC volunteers to spend the morning planting more than 40 trees, annuals and shrubs, assisting with landscaping and beautification and installing six new pieces of nature-based play equipment inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. Preschoolers and their teachers watched excitedly as the volunteers rolled out the new orange and blue PNC-Bears mini-football turf.

“On behalf of our families in the community, we are deeply appreciative of the investment from PNC, Chicago Bears and our other partners,” said Edgar Ramirez, Chicago Commons chief executive officer. “The outdoor learning area will help spark curiosity, encourage imaginative play and self-awareness for our young children through our Reggio Emilia-inspired educational philosophy.”

The green space, increasing to almost half an acre, is now home to a new double slide, a log crawl tunnel, climbing structures, balance beams, and a fossil dig structure to encourage learners to develop skills to crawl, walk, climb, maintain balance and coordination.

PNC volunteers also engaged indoors working with preschoolers on learning activities and handed out special gift bags to the little learners filled with a pumpkins, Bears stickers and crafts. Since 2015, PNC has supported Chicago Commons as part of PNC Grow Up Great®, a \$500 million, multi-year, bilingual program to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. Employees are provided up to 40 hours of paid time off per year to volunteer and can earn grants for partner organizations. Currently, three teams are volunteering up to 400 hours which will earn PNC grants for Nia Center totaling over \$10,000.

Demolition of the playground began in August with the help of PNC and Bears volunteers, under the supervision of Accel construction. The space will be used to host family-friendly events and by local partners such as the West Humboldt Park Development Council. A grand opening for the community is planned next spring to highlight the new green, blossoming space.

### **About the Organizations**

For 125 years, Chicago Commons programs have empowered children, families and seniors to GO further to live richer, more fulfilling lives. Since our first settlement house, we’ve anchored ourselves in underserved communities to give neighbors the tools and skills needed to reach their potential and thrive across generations. To fulfill that mission, we provide high-quality early childhood education, family-centered adult education, and senior services to more than 3,000 children, adults and seniors annually. We serve four core neighborhoods: Humboldt Park, Pilsen, Back of the Yards, and Bronzeville; and our Home Care program serves seniors throughout Chicago and its surrounding counties.

One of the founding franchises of the National Football League, the Chicago Bears were established in 1920 as the Decatur Staleys by legendary player, coach and owner, George S. Halas; the Bears are the only team celebrating their 100th season in conjunction with the NFL this year. The team moved to Chicago in 1921 and has gone on to win the most games in league history along with nine championships. The Bears 28 Hall of Famers is the most of any team in the NFL. In the community, the Bears strive to be leaders throughout Chicago and its suburbs by supporting initiatives focused on youth football, health and fitness, volunteerism and civic involvement, and education.

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group ([www.pnc.com](http://www.pnc.com)), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through Grow Up Great, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual \$500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. For more information, visit <http://www.pncgrowupgreat.com>.