

## The Birth of Head Start for the Nation

On May 18, 1965 President Johnson created Head Start -- a lifeline for millions of children.



Lady Bird Johnson attends the ceremony for National Head Start Day, June 30, 1965. Front row, left to right: Timothy Shriver, Robert Shriver, Danny Kaye, Lady Bird Johnson, Mrs. Lou Maginn (Director of a Head Start project in East Fairfield, Vermont), Sargent Shriver. (LBJ Presidential Library)

President Lyndon B. Johnson created [Head Start](#) — a program to help meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs of preschool-aged children from low-income families.

In his State of the Union address in 1964, President Johnson declared a "War on Poverty." Soon after, Sargent Shriver, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity from 1964 to 1968, brought together experts to develop a child development program to help communities meet the needs of preschool children.

Since its creation in 1965, Head Start has provided comprehensive child development services for 32 million children — services that foster children's growth in social,

emotional, cognitive, and physical development, and monitor their progress in these areas to ensure that they are well prepared for kindergarten.

*"I believe that this is one of the most constructive, and one of the most sensible, and also one of the most exciting programs that this nation has ever undertaken."*

— *President Lyndon B. Johnson on the Head Start program, May 18, 1965*

## **The Birth of Head Start in Bayonne, N.J. – Summer of 1965**

Most people are unaware that in 1964 Ida Zeik –former principal of Lincoln School in Bayonne, N.J. helped write the legislation which governs Head Start today.

...The late Ida Picker Zeik (1906-1993) was all about Bayonne, not only a teacher and scholar whose research on the history of Bayonne in itself might have given her a place in the city's history, but she was also the second of five generations of Picker women to live in Bayonne. She was an educator and an advocate of the arts, a principal of Lincoln School who was tapped by then President Lyndon Johnson to help draft the concepts for the Head Start Program – arguably, the most effective educational reform made in the latter half of the 20th century

In the summer of 1965 Head Start was first located in the basement of the YMCA. They serviced 60 children. They then moved to 25<sup>th</sup> Street to the building that is now the Forum and increased the enrollment to 98 children. The program then moved to the PAL building.

In 1978, the BEOF approached Mayor Dennis Collins and asked what was happening with the vacant old City Hall Annex located on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The City of Bayonne entered into an agreement with the BEOF providing Head Start with a 99 year lease. The number of children then increased to 102 children with six classrooms.

In 1987, the BEOF approached Mayor Rutkowski for funds to purchase the building at 557 Kennedy Blvd. for a second Head Start building to accommodate 34 additional children.

Then the BEOF met with the Director of the Hudson County Chapter of the Red Cross and asked about a vacant building at 7 W. 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The BEOF purchased the building and once renovated it now has an enrollment of 33 children.

Today, the Bayonne Head Start has an enrollment of 156 children. It has been 53 years since the children in Bayonne N.J. have participated in an exciting program to ensure that they are ready for kindergarten.