

**Project Acorn's Child's Play
NEWS RELEASE**

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Project Acorn's Child Play Honors a local Business, School and Family.

(Morristown, NJ): On Friday evening October 24th Project Acorn, the Morristown non-profit that funds preschool education, holds its fifth annual fall fundraiser, Child's Play, and all are invited. The Autumn Festival-themed event takes place in Morristown at the Haggerty Education Center of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum. This year's event includes a salute to Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation (Novartis), The Madison Montessori School and the Salerno family of Mendham.

Child's Play guests will enjoy cocktails and hearty hors d'oeuvres with entertainment provided by, among others, a magician, balloon artist, and a palm and tarot card reader. A silent auction will feature *Experiences You Can't Buy* – shadowing opportunities, hands on experiences, even pumpkin carving lessons. A teen dance group, Essence, that includes Project Acorn alumnae will perform, and one-of-a-kind scarecrows made by students and staff from Project Acorn partner preschools will also be on sale.

Novartis, The Madison Montessori School and the Salerno family will be honored at the event. Jim and Barbara Salerno were among founding benefactors of Project Acorn, called upon by their friend, and Project Acorn founder, Stuart Lasser, when he started the organization in 1995. Since then, the Salerno's have sponsored one child's preschool education every year. The family is dedicated to giving back to the community and their philanthropy is shared by the next generation, Michael and Kathy Salerno, who continue the family tradition: Michael says that having their own children experience preschool highlighted the importance of Project Acorn's efforts.

The Madison Montessori School has been a Project Acorn Partner School for ten years. Terry Armstrong, Director of Madison Montessori, explains that the school supports Project Acorn because its mission is very close to the School's heart: to make quality preschool education available for children who would not otherwise have the opportunity. "Even more, Project Acorn epitomizes people helping people," says Armstrong. "Its staff and Board of Trustees' work hard and have a far-reaching impact on our society that cannot be overestimated. We are in awe of what Project Acorn has accomplished since its inception."

Corporate support is another important component in Project Acorn's funding of preschool education. Rhonda Nesmith Crichlow, Executive Director, Philanthropy and Community Development at Novartis reports that the company's philanthropy programs focus on developing sustainable initiatives, especially those that address significant health and education issues for underserved and diverse populations. "Our collaboration with Project Acorn over the years is a perfect example of how well the missions of both our organizations are aligned," says Crichlow. "By supporting Project Acorn's early childhood education programs we can contribute to the long-term social and academic success of these local children."

These benefactors and others in the local community provide a strong base that allowed Project Acorn to send over 80 youngsters to preschool this year. Says Karen Titterton, Project Acorn Executive Director, "The support of companies like Novartis, schools like Madison Montessori, and families like the Salernos is critical to meeting the growing need for access to early childhood education in our community."

Project Acorn's mission is to give area children a chance to attend quality preschool regardless of family finances. Since its inception in 1995, the organization has launched the academic careers of over 400 children. For Child's Play ticket information, or to learn more about the organization, contact Paola Valencia at (973) 455-7815 or ProjectAcorn@aol.com.

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CAPTION: Jessica Titterton with scarecrow at Child's Play.