



City of Alexandria, VA

Department of Community and Human Services

News Release

Recognizing Eight Years of Early Childhood Prevention Programing: *Al's Pals* Has Reached Over 2,880 Alexandria Children

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Over the last eight years, more than 2,880 Alexandria children aged 3-5 have made great strides in decreasing problem behaviors and developing their social skills, thanks to the friendly puppets in the *Al's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices Program* offered by the Department of Community and Human Services.

Al's Pals is a science-based program that helps develop personal, social and emotional skills through 46 interactive lessons utilizing puppets, songs and engaging activities that teach children to be good decision makers. *Al's Pals* teaches lessons such as expressing feelings appropriately, caring about others, using self-control, thinking independently, accepting differences, making safe and healthy choices and solving problems peacefully. The students are able to connect with the puppets and the songs, which helps them to recall and apply key skills and concepts.

Prevention and early intervention programs for young children increase protective factors and decrease significant risk factors, which together help to improve school readiness and positive outcomes across the developmental spectrum. In addition to the *Al's Pals* program, the Preschool Prevention Team has provided the following services over the past eight years:

- Conducted 216 preschool staff workshops and 504 parent workshops and support groups
- Made 2,233 child and classroom observations
- Provided 7,381 parent and staff consultations
- Conducted 2,161 child and family therapy sessions
- Facilitated 1,123 interactive caregiver/child playgroups

Al's Pals is implemented in 40 classrooms City-wide, and is made possible by grants from the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation, a division of the Foundation for Healthy Youth.

For more information, contact Preschool Prevention Team Supervisor Lib Gillam at 703.746.6009 or lib.gillam@alexandriava.gov.

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