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# Harlem Children Enjoy First Bright Space Center Dedicated Play and Learning Environment

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## FOR THE MEDIA

"We are inspired and energized by this partnership with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Abyssinian Development Corporation, and Community Playthings, which will provide some of Harlem's neediest children with engaging educational places to play, learn, and find security and warmth," said David Lissy, CEO, Bright Horizons Family Solutions and Member of the Board of the Bright Horizons Foundation for Children. "It is our mission to raise the bar for the quality of care and early education for young children across this country. This partnership helps ensure that Harlem's neediest children will get an early start and opportunity to begin a never-ending journey of success in school and life."

## Bright Space Centers Enable Homeless Children to Discover the Magic of Childhood

Studies have shown that children of all ages thrive when they have a safe place in which to explore the world around them, filled with books, toys, and activities that are developmentally appropriate. However, the reality for homeless children is that they do not have access to the space and equipment necessary to develop social, cognitive, gross motor, and language skills, which are so critical for success later in life.

At homeless shelters, it is a challenge simply to find a room to sleep in, never mind toys to play with, comfortable chairs to sit on, or books to stimulate the imagination. When children are in a homeless shelter, it is a challenge for them to discover the magic of childhood.

"Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center is proud to participate in this partnership with Abyssinian House, Bright Horizons, and Community Playthings. For almost four years, Bright Horizons has managed MSKCC's Children's Center on Roosevelt Island, and now also provides back-up childcare and eldercare to our almost 10,000 employees," said Dennis Dowdell, Jr., Vice President of Human Resources at MSKCC. "This beautiful Bright Space would not be possible without the support of our employees who raised funds for this employee-driven initiative. We applaud our staff and the staff of the MSKCC Children's Center on Roosevelt Island for their commitment to the needs of homeless children and families in our community."



Cozy reading nook offers award-winning books in new, handmade bookcases

For nearly 15 years, ADC has operated Abyssinian House, providing Harlem's neediest families with counseling, intensive case management, and referrals to other social service agencies. ADC works with families to provide support and resources in order to successfully transition them into permanent housing and offers quality child care and recreational activities such as the new Bright Space center.

"It gives us great joy and a sense of real accomplishment to open the doors to Harlem's first Bright Space at Abyssinian House," said Sheena Wright, President and CEO of ADC. "I thank Memorial Sloan Kettering, Bright Horizons, and Community Playthings for their support and for opening their hearts to the youngsters here at Abby House."

The Bright Horizons Foundation for Children, the nonprofit organization of Bright Horizons Family Solutions, the leading provider of employer-sponsored child care, early education and work/life solutions, established the Bright Space program to create appropriate play and learning areas for children of all ages living in homeless shelters.



Craft materials, school supplies, and educational games and toys are readily available to spur creativity and learning

In a Bright Space, the well-worn children's area in many shelters is transformed by a team of early education and design professionals to create a warm, inviting environment where homeless children can simply be children.

Curtains are put up, cozy nooks are strategically placed around the room to give children of all ages a comfortable place to explore, and shelves overflow with award-winning children's books, educational toys and games, and soft toys. Dramatic play areas are set up so children can act out their fantasies and learn to socialize with their peers. Each Bright Space is designed specifically for the individual shelter by early education professionals from Bright Horizons, who create the Bright Space to help meet the needs of the children living in the shelter.

In addition to the opening of the Abby House Bright Space, plans are underway for MSKCC's screening facility, the [Breast Examination Center of Harlem](#), to provide cancer education and screening information to the shelter's residents.

New York based Community Playthings graciously donated furniture, equipment and toys for the Bright Space, creating a welcoming, friendly environment for the children at ADC. Visit [www.communityplaythings.com](http://www.communityplaythings.com) to learn more.



The Bright Space media center features a PlayStation console, hit movies, and board games for all ages

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