



DON'T BOTHER ME I'M BUSY -- Mikey Bartlett digs in at Child Care Center opening on October 16th

Child Care Center opens for year, staff and children adjusting well

by Jim Caster

The new Child Care center, which opened Oct. 16, is now in full operation.

The center's staff, which is composed of professional child care specialists, volunteers, and work-study students, is stressing the development of motor skills, language development, and decision making in daily activities.

The center is funded for 63 children from two to five years old, but is licensed for 114.

It now accommodates 33 children of student-parents and 15 youngsters from the community.

"We're really all excited about the way the program is going together," said Diane Hinds, child care center coordinator.

The center is increasing enrollment every day, according to Hinds. "We still have lots of room," said Hinds, "possibly enough for 20 more children of student-parents."

In addition to the care provided by the center each child will be given a battery of tests, according to Hinds.

"We'll be doing a developmental evaluation to decide where the child is as far as his growth and development," Hinds said.

The tests will include color identification and physical actions.

The youngsters will also be tested in basic concepts such as their knowledge of in, out, in front of, behind, etc. The curriculum will be decided from this battery of tests.

"The children are adjusting to their new environment quite well, according to Hinds. "We have had two or three children who have experienced some separation anxiety but the majority of them have had pre-school experience," Hinds said.

"They were a little hyper the first day trying everything out and riding from one place to another, but the majority of them seem very comfortable," Hinds said.

The center is equipped for those days when it is raining and muddy outside. "The facility is very well designed for activities. There is the pit area with gravel that is very popular with the children. They are allowed to use the large trucks and shovels, etc.," Hinds said.

"The child never has a strict schedule in the center and they are not separated into age groups. We have a team of teachers that is responsible for an age group and they know what's happening to them," said Hinds.

"But the group of children is never required to participate in the activities that they (the teachers) are presenting. A child is free to choose the four year old activities, the five year old activities, and whatever else they want," said Hinds.

"The workers are very open and allow the children to make their own decisions. One of the things we emphasize is decision making and the ability to make choices," said Hinds.

The staff had a very short time to make plans, but according to Diane Brown, a teacher in the center, everything has gone smoothly.

"I think the room lends itself to confusion at first because it's so large. We concentrated this week on the children's self concepts and getting comfortable with us as strange adults," Brown said.

Since the center is more than just a preschool, the adults will help the children develop rather than just babysit them. "We want

the younger ones to be able to be self confident with the adults they are not used to," said Brown, "and we want to work on their motor skills and co-ordination."

She also stressed that they would work with the children's language development.

"There is a large amount of women going back into the work force so they have to find care for their children," said Brown.

"With mothers going back into the work force they're going to meet a lot of different kinds of people, so they need the skills of co-ordination and language development to be really sharp in the outside world," Brown said.