

GODDARD SCHOOL OFFERS LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

BY WADE COGGESHALL • JANUARY 06, 2009

AVON — Robert and Sarah Cummins have always wanted to do something on their own.

That desire, combined with their experience in education and working with youth, made them good candidates to open a Goddard School here.

Classes started Monday at the non-denominational school, which is at 8547 E. U.S. 36. Children ages 6 weeks to 6 years are eligible for the program, which promotes learning through play. Participants are encouraged to explore various activities like painting, music, fitness, nature/science, and reading at their own pace.



Robert and Sarah Cummins recently opened a Goddard School for early childhood development at 8547 E. U.S. 36 in Avon. WADE COGGESHALL/FLYER PHOTOS

“All those things help develop the child’s motor, cognitive, and intellectual skills,” Robert said.

Spanish and sign language also are taught, and there’s a computer lab.

Instructors, meanwhile, offer guidance while allowing students the freedom to explore on their own. Different themes are featured each month. That’s what Sarah liked about Goddard when she toured one of its schools two years ago.

“It’s not a rigid, cookie-cutter program,” she said. “That helps build confidence in children, which is huge for them when they’re starting out in school.”

An underwater-themed mural greets visitors at the entrances, stemming from Robert’s college degree in marine science. Classes, split into various age groups, are named after various sea creatures. Students graduate to higher levels only when they meet certain developmental standards.

Robert recently left his job as project manager at Harlan Bakeries to focus on Goddard. Previously he taught high school science in Massachusetts.



A wall-size underwater mural greets visitors as they enter the building. Each classroom is named after a sea creature.

“I think my background in education, as well as my management experience, are well-suited for running a school,” Robert said.

Sarah has a master’s in social work and has worked with youth for almost 10 years.

“The both of us combined, I think we’re a good team,” Robert said.

The Cummins serve as on-site managers at Goddard, coordinating the business side. Kim Rumley is overseeing the teaching staff and curriculum.

They settled on early childhood development because of its importance in shaping people's lives.

"It's the foundation of what people do," Robert said. "When they're children that's when they learn the best. They need the most care; they need to feel the most safe and secure. I truly believe the Goddard School offers that."

Indeed, four security cameras monitor this building's periphery. The front door is outfitted with a thumb-print scanner, and each parent of a student is given a password for access.

The couple has a 4-year-old daughter who attends the Goddard School® in Fishers. Robert says she's blossomed in the program — a major reason why they wanted to open their own franchise.

"She comes home at night and says things that make us go, 'Wow, where did you learn that?'" he said. "We're pretty impressed with it."

She was apprehensive when she first started school.

"Now it's all she talks about — 'Daddy, when can I go back to school?'" Robert said. "She's made a lot of good friends there. She gets a twinkle in her eye every time you mention it. That's what it's all about. I want to do that for other children."

Children can enroll at any time in Goddard for a minimum of two days per week, up to five, for a half or full day. There's also a summer program open to children older than 6 years. Hours are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

An open house is scheduled from 4-8 p.m. Jan. 13 and a grand opening celebration is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Feb. 7.

For more information, call the Goddard School® at 272-1337 or visit the website www.goddardschool.com.

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