

PATCH SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE: THE GODDARD SCHOOL

By Michael Blankenheim • December 12, 2011



*The Goddard School on Old Annapolis Road recently had its grand opening.
Credit: The Goddard School*

New guided school for the little ones teaches learning through play.

Nita Armstrong traveled a number of paths before becoming the hands-on-owner of Bowie's new Goddard School, which has a multi-level educational curriculum for its infant to 5-year-old students.

At Mount Holyoke College, where Armstrong received her bachelor's degree, she studied applied math and physics. She went on to spend 20 years in the corporate world, much of it as an executive.

Armstrong also became a mom and did "mom things" such as volunteer for soccer leagues and the Brownies. Her daughter is now 9, and Armstrong said that over the years she watched and learned what a quality education did for her child.

Armstrong also always wanted to start her own business. So when the time became right in her life for her to do so, she said it was only natural she gravitate toward education.

"I love children, I love education," said Armstrong. "I know what education did for my daughter. I know how it got her started right."

As the owner of a locally operated Goddard School franchise, Armstrong said she sees to it that those children are all treated with love and respect while they learn and have fun doing so.

That learning is accomplished through a highly organized but play-based curriculum.

As examples, during December pre-K students are learning about winter and in the third of the week of the month they will hear about gingerbread and be told several updated versions of the classic gingerbread stories. Students will learn winter weather words in Spanish this month and the English letters the pre-K students will focus on are s, b, f and o.

Over in the room for infants, teacher Gwen Clocker explained what the school does for the little ones. That includes ensuring that their charges learn to listen and respond to voices, can follow a toy with their eyes and learn to hold an object in one hand. When the time is right, they help the babies learn to be on their stomachs, a precursor to crawling.



*Officer John McMaster of the Bowie police accepts a donation for the Shop with a Cop program from Goddard School owner Nita Armstrong.
Credit: The Goddard School*

Meanwhile, there is constant affection and cuddling. “Infants have to learn to trust adults,” Clocker said.

The school, on Old Annapolis Road near Route 197, is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and has more than 60 students and is continuing enrollment. There is a staff of 15 who teach in nine classrooms in what Armstrong describes as a “state of the art building.”

During the school’s grand opening last month, Armstrong invited other local businesses and raised money for the Bowie Police Department’s “Shop with a Cop” program.

“We’re going to be here a long time, and we want to be good neighbors,” Armstrong said. “We believe in developing trust at levels, including with the community, with our parents and with our children.”