

'GODDARD GAMES' HELPS SPREAD ANTI-BULLY MESSAGE FEB. 5

By Sean Delany • January 28, 2011



Shelby Township resident Mary Beth Theiss, owner and operator of The Goddard School in Macomb Township, shares a smile with Katie Dumas, the school's director of education. The facility is hosting the "Goddard Community Games" Feb. 5 to help spread its anti-bullying message.

A local school owned and operated by Shelby Township resident Mary Beth Theiss is hosting an event Feb. 5 that will teach parents how to combat bullying, and teach children about relationships, understanding and self-esteem to prepare them for grade school.

"By teaching children to make positive choices, we're taking the power away from bullies and putting it back where it belongs," said Theiss, who opened The Goddard School® in Macomb Township nearly two years ago.

The facility, which is located on Hayes Road just north of 24 Mile Road, is part of the Goddard Systems franchise, which currently licenses more than 360 franchised schools with more than 40,000 students in 34 states.

"I was born and raised in Shelby Township, but my first experience with Goddard came when I lived in Ohio," Theiss said. "It was a great experience for my children, so when I moved back to the area I knew I wanted to share that experience with others."

Theiss said she jumped at the opportunity to open her own school when the site in Macomb Township became available. The school currently has more than 110 students, ranging in age from 6 weeks to 6 years.

"At Goddard, we don't believe in focusing on the negative," said Katie Dumas, the school's director of education. "Instead, we focus on helping the student in need, which takes power away from the bully."

That method - known as "reflecting" - is the basis for the school's anti-bullying program, which encourages children to speak up about aggressive behavior.

"Reflecting is about offering choices," Dumas said. "Instead of focusing on the bully's negative actions, such as taking a toy from another student, we ask 'What can we do to make that student feel better?' By focusing on the victim, we take the power away from the bully."

Playful learning has been at the heart of The Goddard School's core curriculum from the beginning, Theiss said. This approach to learning, which helps introduce children to new skills in a playful and engaging way, is supported by a growing body of research from Play for Tomorrow, the consortium behind the respected playful learning movement.

"We make learning enjoyable and we build in lots of opportunity for each child to experience the satisfaction of success," said Joe Schumacher, CEO of Goddard Systems Inc. "A key benefit of this approach to learning is its emphasis on building self-esteem and confidence as children try, and succeed at, new challenges. A confident child is much less likely to develop into a bully or to accept bullying from another child.

To jumpstart this initiative, The Goddard School will host the Goddard Community Games event Feb. 5 in communities across the nation. The focus will be on fun and enrichment, but also will teach children about playing well with others and accepting each other's differences.

"In our preschools, playful learning activities not only equip children with specific skills and knowledge, but also teach them about friendship, compassion, cooperation and kindness," said Sue Adair, director of education at Goddard Systems Inc. "In fact, as a part of this special day of fun and learning, the children will be involved in a Good Deed - an outreach program that will benefit the local community. As we foster a sense of accomplishment and purpose in each child, we build a foundation of self-confidence that we believe is the best defense against bullying."

To learn more about the event, visit <http://www.goddardschool.com/games>