

THE GODDARD SCHOOL IN HOWELL

Exceeding Expectations In Education And Childcare

By Stephanie Bruther

The moment you walk into The Goddard School in Howell, you know you are not in a typical pre-school or day care center. The first thing you see is a huge playroom. Sunlight streams through its cathedral ceilings. It is filled with toys for climbing and imaginative play. A computer station is set up on a kid-sized table. The walls are decorated with the bright primary colors of children's artwork and photos. It is a room that any child would run to explore!

Under the guidance of owner/operator Jody Donnelly and Director Alison Ribera, The Goddard School in Howell has been in operation since 1999. The school is open five days per week from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and offers full-time and part-time programs for children ages 6 months to 6 years old.

The school strives to create an environment where each child's natural curiosity and creativity can develop. Children are separated into four age groups: infant, toddler, pre-school and kindergarten. Infants receive the nurturing attention they need, along with encouragement to develop motor skills, language and cognitive thinking at their own pace. Toddlers enter Goddard's unique "Get Set" program, which emphasizes socialization and skills, such as potty training, that foster independence. Children in this group begin learning sign language, which can lessen the frustration they feel while learning to speak. They are also given lots of opportunities to run, jump, climb and explore on a playground specifically designed

for toddlers. All caregivers at the school are either certified teachers or hold a Child Development Associate certification.

Older children enter Goddard's pre-school and full-day kindergarten programs. As with the younger students, children learn from certified teachers who receive on-going training in topics such as health, safety and discipline. The curriculum is designed to teach children the skills that they will need for future academic success, to nurture their development and to be fun. Students learn language, including Spanish and sign language, basic math concepts, computer skills and science. Fitness, yoga, manners, creative art, music and movement are also part of the learning experience at the Goddard School in Howell. In addition to academics, the children enjoy field trips, visits from special guests from the community, holiday parties and special celebrations. There is also time each day to run, play and pretend on their own playground, separate from the one used by the younger children. Donnelly and Ribera are extremely proud of the social and academic success of the school's past students, several of whom have gone on to receive placement in the area's competitive private schools.

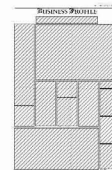
What truly sets this school apart, however, are the numerous "extras" not typically found in a day care or pre-school. For example, on a child's first day at Goddard, his or her teacher starts a portfolio for that child. This portfolio transitions with the child each year he or she is at the school. Photos,

art projects and schoolwork are continually added to it so that parents are able to clearly gauge their child's progress. After the child has moved on to elementary school, the portfolio becomes a treasured keepsake of his or her early years.

Their lunch program is unique as well. In addition to the healthy snack provided by the school each day, parents may choose to send in a hot lunch from home. The food is heated up by the lunchroom staff and delivered to each child at the appropriate time.

Hygiene is always a concern at day care centers and pre-schools. The Goddard School in Howell takes extra measures to ensure that germs have as little opportunity to spread as possible. Staff members disinfect all surfaces at the end of each day and a sanitation system is in place for keeping toys, books and shelves immaculately clean. The air itself is constantly being cleansed by an air purification system which runs through the school's HVAC system!

Even among other Goddard Schools, this facility stands out. As part of a national franchise, all Goddard Schools are subject to two random Quality Assurance assessments per year. The Howell school has consistently scored an impressive 98 percent to 99 percent on all of their QA audits. They also became the first out of approximately 200 Goddard Schools nationwide to receive a score of 100% on an audit. They have gone on to achieve two more perfect scores since, while only a few other facilities have been able to earn one even once! Addition-



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ally, they have won Goddard's prestigious Circle of Excellence Award six times, most recently in 2008, and Ribera was named Director of the Year in 2000.

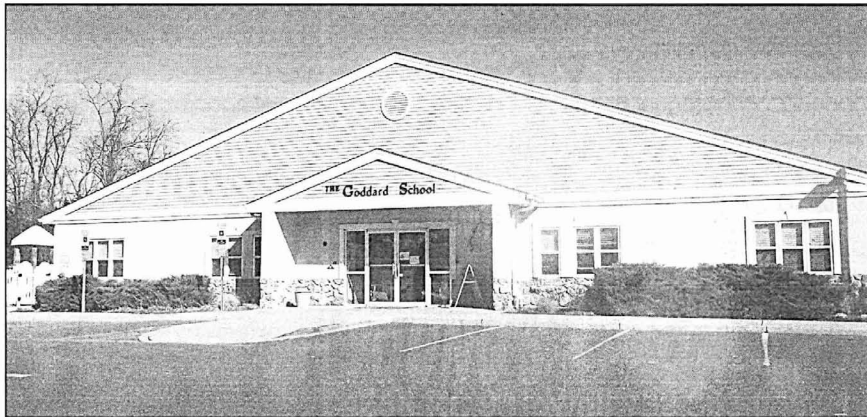
Ribera attributes the school's success largely to the dedication of owner Jody Donnelly. "She is on-site full-time here, which not all owners are," she explains. "Jody is continually investing back into the facility, upgrading and replacing toys or equipment."

Donnelly says, "Nothing is broken or dirty here. If we can't fix it or clean it, we get new." Both

women, who have worked here together since the school opened, also pride themselves on keeping the atmosphere of the school comfortable, warm and friendly. "It's not at all businesslike," says Rivera. "We know each child. We care about each child. They become like family to us to the point where it's hard when they grow up and move on. But many parents and former students still stop in to see us and we're so proud of their accomplishments!" Their low staff turn-over rate, especially among the head teachers, indi-

cates that the warm and friendly atmosphere extends to the staff as well. "Happy teachers equal happy children," says Donnelly. "So I make an effort to make my teachers happy to be here."

The Goddard School in Howell is open year round. Children up to 8 years old are accepted for their summer camp program. For a tour or for more information, please contact the Goddard School in Howell at 732-886-7100 or visit their Web site at www.goddard-school.com.



The Goddard School in Howell is located just off Route 9 South at 65 Kent Road.



The Exploration Room serves as an extension of the classroom at The Goddard School. It also provides a fun place to play when the weather keeps the children inside.

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