

# SPRING RESIDENT FINDS HER BUSINESS NICHE

By Flori Meeks • Wednesday, November 16, 2011



Asha Patel, left, is the owner of The Goddard School in Spring and Melissa Smith, right, is the Director. Freelance photo by Jerry Baker Photo: Jerry Baker / HC

**Asha Patel** has known since she was a girl that she would start her own business one day.

After opening a franchise of The Goddard School in Spring, she said she's glad she combined her goal with another lifelong passion: her love for children.

"It's been quite challenging, but it's been fun," said Patel, who also lives in the Spring area. "I really love being around children and making a difference."

The Goddard School, which has about 360 locations nationwide, is based in King of Prussia, Pa. It opened 20 new schools in 2010 and is expected to open 20 more by the end of 2011.

The school serves children from 6-week-old infants to pre-school students and also offers an after-school program for children up to age 8.

Patel's location is based at 8727 Eastloch Drive, near the intersection of Spring Cypress Road and Champion Forest Drive. Currently, the school is one-third full, Patel said, with about 80 families with a staff of 20.

One of the things that appealed to her about the school is its emphasis on bringing together playtime and learning.

"It's a play-based environment," she said. "Everything is approached in a fun, creative way.

"The kids think they're playing, but they're learning the objectives behind the activities."

Patel said she inherited her interest in entrepreneurship from her family members, who put her to work at their Dallas-based hospitality business during her childhood and teen years.

"They raised me with a strong work ethic," Patel said. "They said work hard and do what you love to do."

She pursued a career in business marketing, but decided the corporate world was not for her after the birth of her son, **Shaan**, now 5.

She heard about The Goddard School from an out-of-town family member with a franchise, she decided that might be a good way to pursue her long-time dream of owning a business.

Patel liked what she found, met with a company representative and began the process of launching her own franchise.

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It was a long road, she said, that began three years ago and ended with the school opening Aug. 1.

The process was an educational one, Patel said.

“It taught me a lot of patience,” she said. “There were so many steps along the way.”

Her focus now, she said, is helping her young business thrive.

The Goddard School’s business model calls for the owners to work onsite, alongside an education director who handles teacher mentoring and classroom management.

At the Spring location the education director is Melisa Smith of Cypress, who was a curriculum director at a preschool before coming to The Goddard School.

Smith said she’s excited about working at the new school.

“They take the whole child in mind when they develop their lesson plans; they keep the children engaged.”

She also had praise for Patel. “Asha is very well organized,” Smith said. “She takes the time to do the homework to learn what the community needs. She makes the teachers feel valued, and she talks to families about what they want.”

For more information about the Spring location of The Goddard School, call 281-251-4507. The Goddard School also has a location at 8522 Princeton Place Drive in Tomball. For details about this campus, call 281-516-2111. For more information about the school’s philosophy and programs, visit [www.goddardschool.com](http://www.goddardschool.com).