

## GODDARD SCHOOL HOLDS POTLUCK FAMILY FEAST

MERJD42@OPTONLINE.NET • READER SUBMITTED • DECEMBER 2, 2008

**F**or families at The Goddard School® for Early Childhood Development, at 255 Route 70 in Toms River, Thanksgiving wasn't a religious occasion, like most other holidays, but more of a "family" fest -- and all about gratitude.

Each year, Dana Chibbaro, the owner and operator of the pre-school and kindergarten near Whitesville Road, and the teachers at her school, host a potluck Turkey dinner with members of the school's community -- to not only celebrate the holiday, but to signal the completion of their annual Thanksgiving Food Drive for the Monmouth & Ocean Counties Food Bank.

Last Wednesday evening, on November 26th, the students, their families, and the teachers participated in a Family Feast of Thanksgiving, after delivering almost 600 pounds of non-perishable foodstuff to the Food Bank headquarters, located in Neptune. Their effort was intended to benefit some of the 40,000 children of the less-fortunate families in our region.



*Route 70 Goddard School early-education students perform 'Ten Little Indians' skit with American Sign Language to entertain parents during the holiday celebration last Wednesday. Photo courtesy of the Route 70 Goddard School staff*

In addition to collecting donations for the food drive, the 75 children and their teachers concentrated on making some Pilgrim hats, native American headdress to wear at the feast, and even placemats for the meal, in memory of the first harvest feast between the Pilgrims and native Americans that has become the model for our current-day Thanksgiving tradition.

"Thanksgiving is really a special time of the year in my family", said Ms. Chibbaro. "And, as I walked among the families gathering on Wednesday, I also thought about the importance of our community involvement. For all of our families, it was an opportunity to share a meal with friends -- while building community ties. We're especially pleased to host these autumn traditions at our school, because we know how it fosters a sense of unity and fellowship among our families, along with a sense of comfort and security for our children."

The Route 70 Early-Education center is a proud participant in the "Good Deeds" community-outreach program promoted by franchiser, Goddard Systems, Inc. During this last year, families at the school have been proud to participate in charitable activities for several local and national organizations, in particular:

- Ocean of Love
- The Monmouth & Ocean Counties Food Bank
- The Muscular Dystrophy Association's "Hop-A-Thon"
- The March-for-Babies (formerly, March-of-Dimes) "Walk-A-Thon"
- The American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life"
- St. Jude Children's Hospital "Trike-a-Thon"

The Goddard School® was recently recognized as the "Number #1 Preschool Franchise" for the seventh consecutive year by Entrepreneur magazine. In addition to its nationally-recognized, play-based educational curriculum, The Goddard School® offers children, from 6-weeks of age to 6-years, an exposure to sign language, music appreciation, Spanish, geography, art and art history, yoga, fitness and nutrition, and manners.