

ABOUT TOWN: REDMOND COUPLE OPENS SECOND GODDARD SCHOOL LOCATION

By Jeanne Gustafson



Jeff Barison stands outside the new school Credit Jeanne Gustafson

Redmond residents Jeff and Shauna Barison are expanding their community childcare center to East Redmond with a brand new franchise location of the Goddard School they just opened in a former fire station across the street from Louisa May Alcott Elementary.

Jeff Barison says one of the special things about the franchise is that all the schools are owner-operated, meaning an owner must be working on-site at each location. Barison currently is working at the new location, molded out of the former fire station, while Shauna continues to work on-site at the couple's popular Redmond Ridge location.

The Barisons brought the Goddard School to Redmond in 2008 after discovering the company while living in Portland. They had searched for several months to find just the right childcare setting for their children and were very happy with the environment they found at the Goddard School there.

Jeff Barison had been working in corporate finance, and his wife was an educator, but they were interested in doing something together. Meanwhile, their ultimate goal was to head back to Seattle's Eastside, where they had lived before Jeff's transfer to Portland.

Once day, Shauna came home and said, "Did you know Goddard is a franchise?" Jeff recalls. They spent the next year researching the company and completing their due diligence, and found a place in Redmond Ridge where they could open their first Goddard location.

True to their owner-operator orientation, the Barisons moved into the neighborhood. Jeff Barison says that the family-run operation has been even more gratifying than he expected.

"From a lifestyle standpoint, it's very family friendly," he said.

When the Barison's children were younger, they spent a lot of time with their parents at the facility. Shauna's parents, Bob and Teresa Nichols, are partners in the business and help out with administrative tasks when they are in town (they live in Prosser, Wash.)



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As far as running a business together, Barison says he and Shauna are a nice balance to each other, with his background in the business side and hers in early childhood education—she was a kindergarten teacher and has a master’s degree in early childhood education.

“She brought me a lot closer to the children side, and I’ve brought her closer to the business side, so we really complement each other,” Barison said.

The Redmond Ridge location currently operates at capacity, with about 140 children enrolled and a waiting list, while the new site, which opened last week, already has 47 families, about one-third of its capacity.

The Barisons tried to keep the character of the firehouse by including playful murals depicting children in firefighter costumes and turning the three firetruck bays into classrooms. The building has a total of nine classrooms, plus an indoor play area and a computer lab. The Goddard franchise details what equipment will be in each classroom, though teachers have flexibility to use those tools and toys in creative ways, too, Barison said.

The Goddard School is operated on a proprietary early childhood education model called FLEX (an acronym for Fun Learning Experience), which provides detailed guidelines to help teachers develop lesson plans to support the intellectual, social development and emotional coping skills of each age group. The classes are divided by six-month age increments, Barison said.

“When you have those things in alignment, you move on to the next class,” he said. “They use their curiosity and imagination, so when they go into the school system they have an appetite for learning.”

Barison said one great added benefit of running such a business is the simple fact that there are children there.

“It’s fun being around the kids every day,” he said. “Whenever the business piece gets to be too much, the release valve is just to go into a classroom. Being around the kids gives you a refocus. It’s nice having that.”