

Kids have safe place before, after school

BY JOAN CRONK
for *The Herald*

Nancy Kater knows firsthand how wonderful Summer School District's before- and after-school program is.

Kater, a teacher in the Kent School District, has three little girls who will attend the program this fall. Her oldest daughter was involved in the program last year.

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Parent of three daughters in Summer School District's program

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Rebecca Giles is the recreation director who oversees the program.

Giles said the before- and after-care program started out in 1995 and currently serves every district elementary school at one of their locations. The program is certified with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and as such, meets all their requirements.

"We hire adults for the director and assistant director's position at each site," Giles said.

Everyone is subject to a background check and they all have their CPR and first-aid certifications.

Rich Hanson is what Giles calls the "resident expert on DSHS" and under his watchful eye, the program has been taken to new heights.

"It takes an army to run this program," said Giles, adding that they really have very few problems and things run smoothly.

Giles said the unique part of their program is that when schools are closed for an in-service day, they still accept kids for that day. On Wednesdays, school starts 90 minutes late and additional students are welcome during that time for a mere \$5 fee.

Parents are urged to enroll their kids as soon as possible, as spots fill up fast. There are several different plans for enrollment, depending on the times parents need the care. Some children only need before-school attendance, some after-school and some need it both times, but the cost is competitive and very reasonable.

The before- and after-school activities club services kids from kindergarten through grade 5 who attend Crestwood, Daffodil Valley, Emerald Hills, Bonney Lake, Maple Lawn, McAlder, Victor Falls and Liberty Ridge elementary schools.

Last year, Stephanie Wade found herself in a frantic state, wondering where she could place her daughter who was entering kindergarten. She heard about the program and signed right up, and she has been thrilled with the scope of the program.

"The instructors are so nice," said Wade, who added they always send notes home about the events of the day.

The activities are varied and the kids never seem to get bored, and Wade talked about tables set up with board games, matchbox cars and Barbie dolls — something for everyone. Her daughter looked forward to going every day and making new friends.

The staff interacts with all the students, getting them to the gym for some physical activity, allowing for some homework time and serving up a healthy snack.

Kater said she and her girls visited the site in August to meet the teacher. After they were introduced to the new teacher Kater was impressed.

"The kids just loved it there," she said. "I have confidence that when I drop them off, there will be no tears."

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Joan Cronk Herald