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Wednesday, March 26, 2008

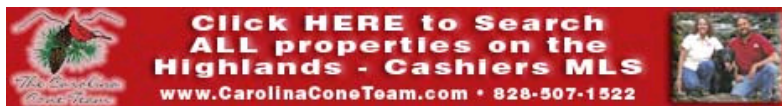
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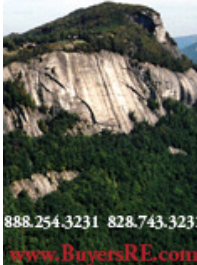


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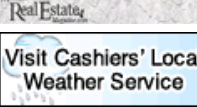
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CVP recommended for state's five-star rating: Cashiers now has two top tier preschools

By Kelly Donaldson, Editor
Posted: Wednesday, Mar 26, 2008 - 09:26:26 am EDT



Students from Cashiers Valley Preschool show their Easter spirit on March 20 in Cashiers. The preschool was recently evaluated and recommended for a five-star rating by the N.C. Division of Child Development.

For the second time in just over a month, the N.C. Division of Child Development has recommended a Cashiers preschool for a five-star rating.

Cashiers Valley Preschool (CVP) has been recommended for a five-star license rating by the N.C. Division of Child Development (NCD CD). This is the highest rating obtainable from the NCD CD. Since opening its doors to serve the Cashiers community in Sept. of 2006, it took CVP only 17 months to achieve this prestigious rating.

"We've always said we're better than five stars, but that didn't matter to parents anyway," said Frank Ralston, CVP's director and lead teacher for the four-year-old class. "We got the maximum rating and we're happy."

In February, Hampton Preschool also was recommended for a five-star rating, giving Cashiers two preschools a rare five-star rating.

According to Luanne Roberts, licensing supervisor for western 16 counties of N.C. through the state's Division of Child Development, the final license paperwork has not been finalized for both schools, but is in the works.

"The consultant has sent in the paperwork to support a five-rating being issued for both preschools, then it will be reviewed by me," said Roberts. "After I review it, it will be sent to the Division of Child Development offices in Raleigh and the licenses will

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be issued at that point."

"I have not received the paperwork on both of them, but consultants have sent in recommendations for five-star ratings," said Roberts.

In their first licensing review and evaluation last March, CVP received a four-star rating from the NCDCCD. The licensing process consists of two components, staff education and program standards. CVP received seven out of seven points for the program standards component and an additional bonus quality point. In the staff education component, CVP received three out of seven points for a combined component total of 11 points, which qualified CVP for a four-star license rating.

Frank Ralston, CVP's director and lead teacher for the four-year-old class, immediately went to work to improve CVP's education component in his quest to obtain a Five Star license rating for the preschool. He enrolled in early childhood education courses at both Southwestern Community College in Sylva and Blue Ridge Community College in Brevard.

Ralston worked nights and weekends to successfully complete additional semester credit hours of early childhood courses during this past summer and fall semesters. The additional early childhood hours qualified Mr. Ralston for a Level III Administration Equivalency through the Workforce Unit of the N.C. Childcare Division. This is the highest level of administration education credit that a preschool/early childhood program can obtain.

With this new educational achievement in hand, Ralston reported this information to CVP's licensing consultant, who was then able to reevaluate CVP and recommend a five-star license rating.

Ralston, his staff, parents, board members, and children who attend Cashiers Valley Preschool are all thrilled and excited to receive a five-star license rating.

"We always believed (and have) been proud of our quality facility, program, staff, parents, and children at Cashiers Valley Preschool and the five-star rating is a well-deserved and hard-earned validation of that. We are so proud that CVP has been able to achieve this highest rating in only 17 months.

"The new rating will allow our preschool to receive the maximum subsidy funding available for Jackson County and the new education that I have received will be beneficial to the children enrolled in our program," added Ralston. "While we are very proud to have achieved a five-star rating, parents searching for a quality preschool need to visit the school to check out the facility, meet the staff, and determine if the overall program is what they are looking for."

Ralston said one of the goals at CVP is to provide the children with a "jump start into kindergarten." He said students at CVP go on many field trips, play an active part in a fun learning process and they are able to learn shapes, colors, numbers, letters, and high frequency "lightning" words. They also learn early reading and math skills. The children participate in a structured learning routine that helps build self-confidence, good manners, and appropriate social development and play skills for the children.

Ralston said parents at CVP play a very important role in all aspects of the school's program. They are invited and encouraged to participate in monthly PTO meetings, fundraising events, field trips, classroom visits, and talent sharing with the children. The school's board of directors is made up of parents and others in the community who were recommended and selected by the parents.

CVP board member Clair Ladensack said, "When my children entered preschool, there were no five-star programs in the county, and they are only 7 and 8-years-old right now. So things have really, really changed here. We're setting a benchmark for what other preschool facilities can aspire to. Our program has always been very progressive and fun and the kids, when they leave are so ready for kindergarten. We know we're doing something right."

In a press release issued by Ralston, the five-star license rating will help the

preschool in their ongoing quest to raise money to offset costs associated with operating the school. As with most privately-funded preschool programs, the annual cost to operate a quality preschool program usually falls short of the funds collected from monthly tuition payments, requiring the school to depend on grants, fund raisers, and private donations to make up the shortfall.

Ralston's assistant teacher is Yvonne Ferrin, his wife, Candice, is the lead teacher for the three-year-old class and her assistant teacher is Donna Smith. Barbie Nichols handles the bookkeeping and administrative duties for the preschool. Together, these early childhood educators have over 50 years of quality pre-K early childhood teaching experience.

The school is capable of housing 29 students, currently housing 28 students. Ralston said openings are becoming limited for the 2008-09 school year. Anyone interested in enrolling a 2, 3, 4, or 5-year-old child in CVP for the 2008-09 (September - May) school year should stop by and visit with Ralston and his staff.

Cashiers Valley Preschool is located at 219 Frank Allen Rd., behind Southwestern Community College and the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library. The preschool's phone number is (828) 743-4320. Go to the Web site www.ncchildcare.net to access any facility in the state of N.C. and its rating. Go to parent tab and pull up a link to search for childcare.

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