

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OPENS IN MONTEREY



MOLLY GIBBS — MONTEREY HERALD

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District opened its first subsidized preschool program in Monterey Thursday

By Molly Gibbs

mgibbs@montereyherald.com

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District's first subsidized preschool program in Monterey opened Thursday.

The Monterey Child Development Center is located at the former Monte Vista School at 251 Soledad Drive. The center is the district's fourth preschool program and the first state-funded preschool program in Monterey attached to a school district.

To celebrate the opening, the district offered the community a chance to tour the center, meet the teachers and learn more about the program Wednesday.

"We're excited to be in Monterey," the district's superintendent PK Diffenbaugh said. "This has been something that the community has asked for. (It) just confirms our commitment to Monterey, it confirms our commitment to continuing to offer high-quality, early-learning opportunities because we know that makes the biggest difference in all of our communities."

The center opened Thursday with two classrooms and a total enrollment of 10 students, said Tia Robinson, the district's coordinator for early childhood education.

Robinson explained that each classroom will have lower ratios, with eight students to one teacher and two aids. The center serves children ages three to five years old and has a total capacity of 48 children.

The program is open to low-income families, district employees and families who may not qualify for state subsidized rates.

Since the program is state funded, monthly tuition is based on a sliding scale. Families that qualify based on income eligibility will pay a discounted rate and the state will cover the difference. District employees will also pay a discounted rate of \$590 a month, while more affluent families will pay a rate of \$850 a month — which is less than half of what other preschool programs are charging in the community, Robinson said.

The district offers three other



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preschool programs in Marina, Seaside and at the recently opened Dual Language Academy child development center.

The district said families who have a child attending a preschool program in Marina or Seaside can request to have their child transferred to Monterey's center if the location is closer.

Monterey resident and dis-

trict employee Kimberly Moir said she was thrilled to learn that the district was opening a preschool program in Monterey. Her three-year-old son was enrolled in the Seaside preschool program but will be enrolled in the center's inaugural class this week.

Moir said the program's pro...

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imity to Monterey and lower rates for district employees was the perfect combination for her family.

“Both of my kids went to the Pacific Grove program,” Moir said. “It was a lot more financially, so this program is a lot more affordable with the employee discount. And it’s just a wonderful program. Curriculum-wise, we’ve been very happy, he’s been thriving in so many areas.”

The district said Monterey’s new child development center will offer a seamless transition from preschool to transitional kindergarten or kindergarten and will focus on preparing children with readiness skills, social and emotional skills, language development, multicultural education and music, arts and crafts.

Moir said the child-centered focus of the preschool’s program stood out for her.

“They really meet the child where they are,” she said. “One thing I’ve loved about (the district), is they do a developmental assessment and give an action plan for the parents and families to be aware of what they can do at home that coincides with what they’re learning in the classroom. It’s a nice bridge from home to school and it really makes for a very comprehensive program where we can support him best.”

Diffenbaugh and Robinson said the new program has received a lot of interest from the community and they’re hopeful more families will enroll in the program.

“My vision someday is that you’ll see at least a full wing full of classrooms,” Diffenbaugh said. “That would just be really exciting.”