

THE FIRST ✿ THE ONLY

Vero Beach Magazine[®]

MARCH 2022

Traditional elements join contemporary design in this

Seaside Sanctuary





Preschool Pays Off

LOCAL EDUCATORS AIM TO EQUIP LITTLE ONES FOR KINDERGARTEN

It was a warm, humid morning in September 2016 when I felt the uncomfortable ache in my stomach that comes when any working parent says goodbye to a child on the first day of preschool. My youngest, Grant, had just celebrated his third birthday and was enrolled in the morning program at Community Preschool.

For Grant's first three years, my wife, Stephanie, and I were fortunate to

have the resources to hire private, in-home childcare. Our own version of the fictional character Mary Poppins was a grandmother named Priscilla who raised her own children and those of several family members and friends on a table-grape farm in the heart of California's great Central Valley. "Nanny P," as we affectionately called her, started working for us just four weeks after Grant's birth in Bakers-

field, California, and stayed with us well into our first year after moving to Vero Beach. She cared for Grant and our two older children, Colin and Olivia, as if they were her own, and helped us give them all an incredibly healthy start to life.

The time came when Priscilla firmly observed in a conversation with Stephanie that "Grant is ready to go to school." She added, "I'll help you find the best place for him,



BY JEFFREY R. PICKERING

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION
© VERO BEACH MAGAZINE

and then it will be time for me to go back home. I've got a few camping trips I'd like to take this summer, and a hunting trip to Kansas in the fall that I don't want to miss."

Colin and Olivia were already enrolled in Saint Edward's School, but their early education programs would not be available to Grant until he was a couple of years older. So, with Priscilla's help, we visited several childcare centers and preschools before finally deciding to accept the invitation from Stephanie Squires, director of the Community Preschool, to enroll Grant there.

What Mrs. Squires and the rest of her team of

early educators promised us was that Grant's experience at their school would prepare him for kindergarten. He would learn his colors and shapes; know his name, age, birthday, and phone number; say his ABC's; and count in order from one to twenty and possibly beyond. He would also learn to manage his emotions and socialize with other children, and most importantly, master the art of personal hygiene and toileting. These skills would all be necessary for him to eventually join his older siblings at Saint Edward's, so we were very excited about the experience Grant would have.

I've often said that



Childcare Resources accepts children from age 6 months to 5 years.



Barbara Ege

CHILDCARE RESOURCES

Childcare Resources works to improve early childhood education throughout the county by offering substantial outreach programs to teachers and caregivers. Frequent workshops expose area educators to national experts free of charge, and two on-staff coaches are available to help teachers at any school implement the strategies they've learned. Additionally, the organization helps teachers continue their educations, thus enriching the pool of qualified local educators.

Barbara Ege, lead teacher in the VPK (Voluntary Prekindergarten) Education program at First Presbyterian Preschool, says, "Childcare Resources has been such a blessing for me." She learned about the organization by attending workshops and then completed the Credentialing Program for Early Educators to earn her CDA (Child Development Associate) certification. In 2021 she completed her associate degree in early childhood education, and she is currently working on her bachelor's. Ege credits the help she has received through the T.E.A.C.H. program (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps), which provides scholarship assistance to teachers at every level—from basic credentialing through a master's degree—making it possible for her to continue her education.

"We all know getting an education is hard," she says. "Childcare Resources and T.E.A.C.H. make the dream of education attainable."

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION

© VERO BEACH MAGAZINE

“I’ve often said that being a parent is like walking around with your heart in someone else’s body.”

being a parent is like walking around with your heart in someone else’s body. Stephanie and I were grateful to have the resources to make getting Grant ready for kindergarten possible, but our decisions were still fraught with worry and anticipation. For too many families, however, the path can be much more challenging.

According to the Florida Department of

Education, in 2020 just 58 percent of Indian River County’s children were ready for kindergarten. While this statistic shows a significant improvement when compared to a decade earlier, there is still work to be done. Fortunately, early childhood educators and advocates in Indian River County are collaborating to ensure that all our children have the same opportunity as my son did

to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

Childcare Resources is one organization that is leading the way in this effort. For almost 30 years, it has provided high-quality early childhood education to economically challenged families in our community. In addition to serving children in its own school, the organization offers professional development programs to local early childhood educators free of charge.

Indian River Community Foundation is proud to support Childcare Resources with regular grants for programs that provide high-quality early education to families in need and for programs

that deliver professional development to educators throughout Indian River County. Childcare Resources also participates in the Community Foundation’s Endowment Partners Program, which helps to strengthen and sustain these important programs for generations to come.

To learn more about how you can support Childcare Resources by making a charitable contribution or a planned gift from your estate, visit www.childcareresourcesir.org. Your generosity will help families and educators and, most importantly, help build a better future for our community’s most precious assets. ☀



A 2020 expansion provided additional classroom space at Childcare Resources, which currently serves more than 100 children.



Fostering relationships is an important aspect of Childcare Resources’ mission.