

# Area daycare centres offer variety

By SANDY HAZELL

The following is the second in a series on area Day Care Centres. This week features facilities in the old village of Markham and Unionville. Next week, Milliken Mills and Stouffville will be examined.



Teacher Janice Bowie (background) plays the music as children have a musical parade. From left Jason Pecchia, Zara Clarke, Christina Clarke and Marshall Fuller enjoy the activities at the Centennial Child Care Centre.

"We really try and involve the parents in our program and encourage their participation," says Pat Grub, supervisor of Centennial Child Care Centre. "We work together as a joint effort. Some parents try and pop over for lunch while others try to attend special events."

Owned and operated by the Centennial Baptist Church, the centre opened last September in the spacious basement of the church. Available to children aged 2 to 5½, the centre has 16 children in its program. Some openings will be available in March. Weekly rates are \$80 per week.

The semi-structured program offers half-hour long music classes every Wednesday and Friday, and every week features Terrific Tuesday, a special events day with activities such as a winter picnic and Valentine's party.

"We put a newsletter out every month, keeping the parents informed of upcoming activities and monthly themes. Some parents have flexible hours so they try to participate when they can," Mrs. Grub said.

As well as having their own staff of three E.C.E. teachers and one trainee, the centre has two regular volunteers and on special outings parents and church volunteers assist.

The Christian day care centre offers children some religious teaching, but is not done in a formal manner, the super-

visor noted.

**CHILDREN'S ACADEMY**  
Academie Des Enfants  
199 Main St. N.

"I want to help children to become bilingual at a very early age," says Shirley Benatar, owner of Children's Academy. In 1982, she opened her day care centre on Main Street Markham, "the heart of the Anglophone community."

Mrs. Benatar previously owned a day care centre in Ottawa and was an active advocate of getting French into public schools in that city. Licensed for a capacity of 92 children the staff includes 5 E.C.E. teachers and 8 assistants. Weekly rates are \$115 for 18 months to 2½ years and \$110 for 2½ to 5 year olds.

"This program is a good base to start elementary school French immersion. Children can have tools for the

future," says Mrs. Benatar. "The children must be made very happy. Happy and disciplined go together along with the best environment and best nutrition."

"Financially, it is very, very hard to run a day care centre. You have to put so much of your own money into it. You have to wait for many years before you see a return. Mostly, you have to pay decent salaries for your staff and always you are replacing and renewing equipment."

Mrs. Benatar is hoping to get approval for an extension of her building to make more room for the existing classes by next fall.

"I definitely think the government should give annual grants for (staff) salaries or subsidize part of the salaries on top of what we're paying. They are very hard workers."

**DICKSON HILL DAYCARE AND NURSERY SCHOOL**  
70 Dickson Hill.

"We have such a diversity of children," says assistant supervisor Nancy Reed. "We respect the rights of children and their individual needs. We try to make their day as happy and productive as possible in a stimulating environment. The children are very close with each other and the staff."

Licensed for 35 children, aged 18 months to 5 years, the staff consists of 3 E.C.E.'s and 2 assistants. The weekly rate is \$80 per week.

Privately owned by Robert P. Mitchell, the centre has been operating on the ground floor of the Apostolic Lutheran Church, supervised by his daughter Judy Normandeaux.

"The most difficult thing in running a day care centre, I think, is getting qualified, competent staff that has the same philosophy as you do," says Mrs. Normandeaux. "We have one of the highest paid staff because we have such low rent. But the centre doesn't make a profit, it just carries itself. We spend a lot of money on nutritional meals for the children."

As well as waiting for several months for the bylaws to be amended, the centre was not immediately recognized by the community because of its location. Situated on the Stouffville-Markham border near 19th Line, the centre now has children coming from Markham, Stouffville, Ballantrae and Dickson Hill.

Kindergarten children are driven to Dickson Hill Public School then brought to the centre by bus for lunch and afternoon daycare. Full-time, part-time and nursery school programs are available.

**UNIONVILLE DAY CARE CENTRE**  
4171 Highway 7 E.

"A lot of professional people want more than a babysitting service," says Marianne Gaettens. "People are really interested in a structured program."

The husband-wife team of Peter and Marianne Gaettens owns and operates two Unionville Day Care Centres. Formerly a large home, the Unionville branch opened in 1981 and caters only to 4 and 5 year olds.

Four nursery school classes are held upstairs, while the main floor is occupied by 32 children in junior and senior day care kindergarten programs. Each group of 16 is led by one E.C.E. and 1 assistant. Cost per week is \$100. Although licensed for 64, the Gaettens chose to use the basement as a full gym facility for the children.

"The nursery school children come here for various reasons. Everybody feels children should learn. They come here to socialize and give the moms a break. Junior kindergarten is not available to some children," says Mrs. Gaettens.

"With the daycare kids, they are here all day. They come from working parents. This is their second home. They are my children while they are here, they definitely deserve the very best. We don't have part-time daycare because we have a group of children who belong together. It is an extension of home."

Peter Gaettens says, "The biggest misconception about daycare is that we are a profit-making centre. We are a service industry. Seventy percent of fees goes into salaries for staff, and other expenses must be met. I think the government should deduct the cost of daycare as an expense for working parents. They should be allowed to deduct all of it, not just \$2,000."

## MARKHAM TRANSIT STUDY PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRES

We need your help in evaluating route and service options for Markham Transit. The Town of Markham is currently undertaking a study of transit services in the Town, and before any decisions are made we would like your input. Drop in to one of the Public Information Centres listed below to see what is proposed for the Fall of 1987. Have a coffee and donut and tell us what you think. For further information please call Markham Transit at 477-7000.

Location	Date	Time
Thornhill (Thornhill Community Centre - 7755 Bayview Ave.)	Monday, March 2	3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Milliken (St. Benedict School - 50 Aldergrove Dr.)	Tuesday, March 3	3:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Markham (Markham Community Centre - 15 Wellington St. E.)	Wednesday, March 4	3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Unionville (Unionville High School - 201 Town Centre Blvd.)	Thursday, March 5	4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

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