

Family Connections Partners with Sequoia Adult School to Bring Program to Redwood City

For nearly 10 years, everyone at Family Connections has dreamed of bringing the parent participation preschool experience to parents and kids in Redwood City. Because so many of our families came from Redwood City to the classrooms in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto, it seemed like a natural fit.

Finally, in fall of 2008, that dream came true for Family Connections and 40 parents, who can now learn and grow with their children at the new classroom just off Middlefield Road in North Fair Oaks. The new facility was made possible by a partnership with the Sequoia Adult School and a Capacity Building grant from SV2, a partnership that gives money to educational nonprofits and other organizations.

The Sequoia Union High School District, which has provided money for teachers' salaries through the Sequoia Adult School for Family Connections' other two sites, purchased an old church building in North Fair Oaks, along with the church's parsonage, two years ago. Family Connections has moved into the old pastor's house and created a classroom for the children who attend the preschool with their parents.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the new building site is the proximity to English as a Second Language classes for the parents at the nearby Sequoia Adult School. About 20 parents in the morning preschool program are also enrolled in ESL classes. With support from the other parents in the program and the teachers, they drop their children off at Family Connections during the mornings and go to the Adult School for classes. As a part of the cooperative program the ESL parents take turns working in the classroom where they gain valuable parenting skills.

"The Sequoia Adult School is very excited about the partnership with Family Connections," said Adult School director Patricia Torres Cocconi. "We were able to merge the childcare program that was at the main campus with the Family Connections program on 4th Ave., so now the ESL students are also able to access parent education. It is a win/win relationship!"

Parents can now learn new skills during their days in the classroom with their children, including child development and positive discipline, and improve their English skills during their weekly class at the adult school. They can put their child development skills to work immediately during their co-op rotations in their children's classroom and improve their ability to be part of the Redwood City community by learning English.

Opening the new classroom in Redwood City has made life much easier for Julia San Bartolome, who no longer has to commute from her Redwood City home to a classroom in Menlo Park or East Palo Alto. "Having a site in Redwood City has made it so convenient for my family and has brought this great program even closer to home," said San Bartolome, who has been a student at Family Connections for three years and joined the Family Connections Board of Directors last year. "My husband and I are so grateful to have found such an effective and quality program to be part of. Preschool is a priority to our family, and Family Connections has been a perfect fit," she said.

Our newest location improves our program by leaps and bounds for our students who live in Redwood City, and also heightens the ability of our Redwood City-based staff to support the parents and children, because the new site on 4th Avenue provides space for Family Connections' administration. For the first time, the Family Connections executive director and staff have a public, visible office and a place for monthly staff and board meetings, all possible because of this new Redwood City facility.