



A Child's Touch, the largest daycare center in the Denver area, gives kids a head start academically and socially

In less than a year, A Child's Touch Christian Daycare Center has gained the distinction of being the largest Denver-area child care center, with an enrollment of 240 children.

But bigger doesn't necessarily mean better in the daycare business, so owners Mike and Debi Grillo have designed their 10,000 square foot building to include a series of individual learning centers for a more personal touch.

The new building, located at 9141 Poze Blvd., contains a computer room, art lab and a soon-to-be-completed woodworking barn. The Grillos also are considering opening a sick-care room in the fall for children with minor ailments.

The Grillos and volunteers worked tirelessly for nine weeks converting and remodeling the Church of God building, a 30-year old church, making it into classrooms, enlarging the kitchen area and much more. More than a hundred

parents, staff and neighbors volunteered to help with landscaping and to construct a fence.

"We cut the cost tremendously by doing the work ourselves," Mike said. "All the interior decorating has 'a child's touch.'"

But the center's success has been a result of what goes on *inside* the building.

The Grillos have many years of child care and teaching experience. Mike's professional qualifications and experience are in elementary and special education, while Debi has a degree in early childhood education.

"Here at A Child's Touch, children can get a well-rounded experience. Kids can get an excellent academic foundation as well as a good solid concept about themselves. We teach a lot of positive traits such as trust," Debi said.

Their program includes a strong



Mike and Debi Grillo (far right) designed and built the playground equipment at A Child's Touch.

Daycare with a

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academic program and individualized learning centers for children ages 12 months through kindergarten.

"It's very important to incorporate learning opportunities that children may be unable to get elsewhere," Debi said, "We offer separate rooms for our art lab, music lab, and computer center."

The Grillos stress that the majority of their 31-member staff are full-time, long-term employees. All the instructors are certified in child care.

"We want to make A Child's Touch one of the best daycare centers in the nation," said Mike. "We want to be unique and provide a place for our teachers to be creative."

The Grillos say that A Child's Touch has been their dream for a long time and they were looking for the right property for four years. Before opening their present building in June 1989, they owned and operated a daycare center in the Lamplighter Mobile Home Park in

Federal Heights.

"When we moved, we wanted to stay close to our other school because it was an established business," Mike said. "We were looking for something that had enough property so we could expand—a place with many children—and this one happened to be right across the street from Bertha Heid Elementary School."

The majority of kids are from Thornton; however, parents bring their children from as far away as Broomfield, Erie, Longmont and Boulder.

A Child's Touch provides two programs geared for children who need occasional daycare. The first program, for preschool age children, is for parents who need a day or two to themselves.

Children can be dropped off in the morning, and the center provides their academic programs as well as access to the Computer Castle, art lab and movement and mime classes.

The second program is the Summer Fun Program, geared to older children ages 6-12. In addition to having access to the art and computer labs, these children can attend a woodworking class and go on field trips in the school's new 65-passenger bus, complete with seat belts.

Each month has a program or activity that involves parent participation on an after-hours basis to promote family

togetherness.

A Child's Touch has already received a great deal of attention. CBS News, with Dan Rather, featured the childcare center last year as part of a five-part series on early childhood education programs. The child care center was one of five early childhood schools across the country selected for the series.

The future looks very bright for A Child's Touch, with long-range plans which include additional self-contained learning centers, soccer field, asphalt game area, additional playground equipment, mini gymnasium, library and movie theater.

A Child's Touch is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. They serve breakfast, a hot meal for lunch and afternoon snacks.

For additional information or a tour, call Debi or the assistant director, Margie, at 286-8460. The school will be open for tours Sept. 7 during Olde Tyme Thornton Days.



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