

A Child's Touch

A Child's Touch at 9141 Poze Boulevard in Thornton offers many learning settings to stimulate children.

Recent additions include a new toddler classroom and a nature area with a small pool and waterfall where children may play with water toys or gather in the quiet setting.

Owners Mike and Debi Grillo are planning to construct a town of 16' by 20' buildings behind the center. It will include a church, a schoolhouse, a country store, a country house, and a rotating science exhibit. Once built, the town will be surrounded by the existing large redwood play castle, the soccer field, and bicycle play space.

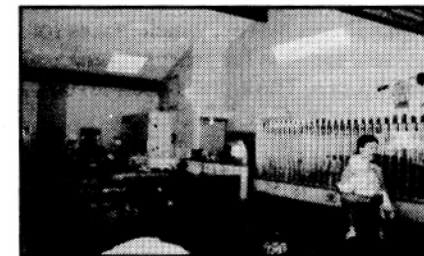
"We try to tune into what we would want if we were children and give them more than one classroom and one playground. Parents are working and have less chance to go to a park and take those little trips," said Mike. "It's all in-house. Education, spiritual and physical needs are met."

The new toddler room, like most of the classrooms, includes a loft area for children to play and gather for activities. There is a generous amount of space for diaper changing, a diaper compactor, a three-tub sink for sterilizing toys, and, for the children, a waterbed area with cushions and a specially designed semicircle toy shelf.

Other inviting learning centers include the school's library, Computer Castle area, and art lab. There is also a comfortable sick-care room for children to go when needed.



Debi and Mike Grillo feel the new nature center is one of many learning settings children thrive on at A Child's Touch.



The loft (at right) in the new toddler center is a common feature in the school's classrooms.

Debi credits the 35-member staff, many of whom have worked with the Grillos at A Child's Touch and their pre-existing daycare for 5-12 years. Teachers are encouraged to be creative with their weekly lesson plans as they target year-end learning objectives. Teachers also include a non-denominational devotion time, in which stu-

dents sometimes memorize scriptures.

Since the Grillos began transforming the former Church of God site across from Bertha Heid Elementary six years ago, they appeared on a CBS five-part series on early childhood education and have been featured in national magazines *Beckley-Cardy Quarterly* and *Children Directory Exchange*.

At the end of the first year, the school had 240 children enrolled and enrollment has increased only slightly as the learning spaces improve and grow. A three to four month waiting list is typical.

In addition to toddler, preschool, and kindergarten programs, the center offers a before and after school preschool program. For more information or a tour call the school at 286-8460.