

One small step toward solving Oregon's childcare crisis



All Around Kids teacher Chelsea Hamblin sits comfortably on the floor with children at play during the opening day of the new community preschool at Healthy U in Cave Junction Monday, April 15.

(Photo by Laura Mancuso for the *Illinois Valley News*)

Thirteen children were playing at learning stations at the opening day of All Around Kids Community Preschool Monday, April 15. All Around Kids is a new program offered by a

longstanding nonprofit organization in the Illinois Valley: Healthy U in Cave Junction.

According to Healthy U's Children and Families Program Director Chelsea Hamblin, the new preschool can serve 14 children, aged 3-5 so currently there is one spot unfilled. The preschool accepts Employment Related Day Care payment and offers a sliding-scale pricing model to ensure that the service is affordable for families.

The preschool is operating from Monday to Thursday, 1 to 5 p.m. All Around Kids is designed to nurture each child's mind, body, and heart.

"The half-day preschool program follows the Reggio Emilia Approach of Early Childhood Education, which is characterized by the belief that the child is a capable co-creator of their own learning," explained Hamblin.

The opening day seemed to go very smoothly, probably in part to the Open House held Thursday for parents to come along with their children for a practice day. "Parents are welcome here," said Hamblin, adding, "This is an all family support system. Parents are also welcome to volunteer after taking my parenting class."

Hamblin seemed very much at home sitting on the floor and interacting with the children, which isn't a surprise if you know her background. She was born and raised in the Illinois Valley and received a B.S. in Early Childhood Development from Southern Oregon University. Hamblin said she has spent many years working as an educator in Josephine County. Besides running children's programs through Healthy U, she is also an instructor in the Early Childhood Education department at Rogue Community College. In addition, she teaches parenting education through The Family Connection using an evidence-based curriculum called conscious discipline.

The other teacher at the preschool is the popular art instructor Ariana Jurisic. If you would like to view some of Jurisic's art and learn more about All Around Kids Community Preschool and/or see the new setup, plan on attending the third annual Spring Art Show Saturday, April 27 from 12-6 p.m. The free art show will be held at Healthy U, which is at 535 E. River Street. There will be live music and bake sale that will help fund the Learning Through Arts Program.