

Shining a light on early learn

Sunbeam Early Learning Center focuses on childhood ed

BY AMANDA DePROSPERO
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Helen Post-Brown never had any intentions of the nursery school she started in 1980 becoming the nationally accredited early learning center it is now. But she's more than happy about the turn of events.

In September, Sunbeam Early Learning Center in Fairmont celebrated its 35th year.

The school follows a Reggio Emilia Approach to learning.

"The Reggio Emilia Approach is an educational philosophy focused on early education," said Post-Brown, who is the owner/director of Sunbeam. "It was started in Reggio Emilia in Italy by parents of the villages around Reggio Emilia after World War II. The city is recognized worldwide for its innovative approach to education.

"At Sunbeam Early Learning Center, we try to follow the philosophy of Reggio Emilia by viewing the child as a protagonist. The focus of the educational experience. The teacher is the partner, nurturer and guide. The environment is the third teacher and parents are partners in the development of the child's education."

The center operates from 6:30 a.m.-6 p.m. and offers year-round care for children 3 months through pre-K.

The children spend time listening to soothing music, doing artwork, playing outside and eating lunch at a round table passing food to each other.

"We want the children that are at Sunbeam and their families to remember us for not only learning activities but feeling comfortable here, evolving here, growing here [and] making friends for life, which we have achieved over the years," Post-Brown said.

One room at Sunbeam is known as the Atelier, which is Italian for art studio. Post-Brown said the art coordinator Phyllis Grey brings children into the studio during the week and helps them work on creative projects.

And if the children find something that interests them, they learn about it at their own pace. For instance, when one child's family was building a house, the

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Young students are leaving for the day at Sunbeam Early Learning Center.



Recreational and educational activities are available for pupils at the center, including equipment (left photo) and painting. Phyllis Gray (left) an instructor at the center, helps pupils (left) and Sawyer Ammons show off their artwork.



Haley Siders (left) and Leyland Phillips eat salads prepared for them during lunch time at the center.

**SUNBEAM
EARLY LEARNING
CENTER**

LOCATION:
1654 Mary Lou
Fairmont, WV
PHONE: 304-361-1111
WEBSITE:
sunbeamearlylearning.com