

# City's Economic Base Grows

## New restaurant and child learning center open in Valparaiso

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, in 2008, there were 29.6 million businesses in the United States. An estimated 627,200 new businesses began operations in that same year. Right here in Indiana, the City of Valparaiso is experiencing growth when it comes to their business sector, adding to those federal statistics. Two new businesses that will open this summer include Growing Kids Learning Center and Greenwich Terrace, which is under new ownership, and each of these businesses say that Valparaiso is the perfect place for their life's work.

At Greenwich Terrace Café, Owner Edwina Shields says her first-time business endeavor is an extension of her family tradition of providing hospitality. "This is our first time in business and it's a family-owned business. My dad always wanted a restaurant but he passed about three years ago, but he always had a pot of food on in case people came over. My grandmother was that way too. So we're a family restaurant and we have people here who have a heart to cook," says Shields, noting the theme of her restaurant is "Every meal is a memory."

"We have healthy choices, so we have no deep-fryer here. We offer things such as California turkey wraps and we have a baked potato named after my aunt who liked to stuff things, so it's called Aunt Ben's Stuffin' Things, which can be stuffed with anything you like, such as barbecued meat or jalapenos. We also serve Stony Gardens seasoned turkeys (owned by local resident C.J. Jackson), we do a great Chicago-style Italian beef, and we have homemade peach cobbler," says Shields, naming just a few items on the ever-changing menu.

The restaurant is located at the same site as the previous Greenwich Terrace Café at 607 Lincolnway. We kept the look the same. The restaurant opened June 11th with a grand opening, and Shields says Valparaiso is the perfect location for her labor of love since she has long been an active member of the community. "I've been in Valpo since 1989 and was the associate pastor at Union Community Church and now I'm a minister in Gary. I'm one of the founders of United for a Purpose here in Valpo and we do education on racial issues. We also have a business called Home Away From Home for Alzheimer patients and we will dedicate one day a month for them at Greenwich Terrace for outings, to eat and gather. Because this building is also used for substance abuse treatment and our restaurant is the foundation of the building, we have decided not to serve alcohol. So kids can run around here and families can be comfortable," she says.

Mike Garatoni, owner of Growing Kids Learning Center, says their



EDWINA SHIELDS (OWNER), NICOLE WILLIAMS, TABITHA HAYWOOD, KYRA HAYWOOD AND DAMARI DAVIS OF GREENWICH TERRACE CAFÉ, CELEBRATED THE GRAND RE-OPENING OF THE RESTAURANT.

business will open in early July and they found a real niche in the community. Wife Beth Garatoni and Mike started their business 15 years ago in South Bend and Valparaiso will be their fifth school. Valpo is a great town. It has a nice solid economic base, a lot of nice young families, and is a nice place to live and do business. I was impressed with their vibrant downtown, and they have a lot of nice neighborhoods and there is always a lot of foot traffic. The shops are full, they have nice restaurants and services, and it looked like some place that could use additional child care. It was under serviced," says Garatoni.

That sector that they will service is educational childcare. "We provide early childhood education and childcare for ages six weeks old through school age. We offer an educational program for all ages to help with elementary studies. We'll be open Monday through Friday every week of the year, from early in morning until 11:30 p.m. Our staff requirements exceed the highest state standards for preschool so we use a national-based standard assessment to screen and reference

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staff. We have over 30 hours of training initially in early education, infant and toddler CPR, and first aid and child care. We continue with more than 20 hours a year of ongoing training. The staff who have an excellent report with young children and provide an educational, safe, and caring environment for

Quality at Growing Kids Learning Center is designed with kids' comfort in mind. "We custom-design and build our state-of-the-art facilities from the perspective of early childhood education and we design self-contained rooms that have lots of activities and amenities including bathrooms; large, oversized windows for natural light; child-designed sinks and drinking fountains, so kids have access to water that is their size; parent-view windows; closed-circuit TV; intercom to intercom within the building that allow parents to communicate with teachers and their child; a fully-enclosed, attached playground that is segmented for different playgroups and follows the highest safety standards for playgrounds; and our parking lot is even designed with kid safety in mind. Our building has over 20 bathrooms to make sure they are close by to kids and are safe," says

Valparaiso has a Growing Kids exclusive which is a dramatic play area on Main Street. Our philosophy stresses hands-on learning through



GROWING KIDS LEARNING CENTER IS SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN VALPARAISO THIS JULY.



Robert Wray | The Times

play, which is how kids learn. There is role playing, socializing, interactive play, and it stresses the various levels of play as they develop. They learn how to problem solve and play with rules. We want to foster that natural development so they have a foundation for learning. Kids like learning and are curious," he says.

Valparaiso continues to offer businesses of every size the support and services they need to survive and thrive in the community.

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