

Rehoboth School expands PreK program, enrolling now

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Independent correspondent

REHOBOTH — Rehoboth Christian School is now offering an expanded PreK program with reduced or free tuition thanks to a grant from the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department.

Classes will begin Tuesday and are open to area children who will be four years old by Aug. 31. The grant money has tripled the number of preschool students served, from 20 to 60, and has allowed Rehoboth to offer an all-day program as well as half-day morning and afternoon sessions.

There are currently openings in all three sessions: five openings in the all-day program, which is \$180 per month; 15 openings in the morning program, which has a \$60 per month fee; and 13 openings in the afternoon program, which is free.

“Rehoboth Christian School is thrilled to be a N.M. PreK site and excited to help all children get off to a solid start in their education,” Carol Bremer-Bennett, school superintendent, said in an email Thursday. “Our newly remodeled classroom is a bright and cheery space that welcomes curiosity and supports interest-based learning.”

State initiative

Rehoboth’s Early Childhood Center, which recently celebrated its fifth anniversary, was founded with money donated by Chuck and Mary Johnson, longtime area educators. The couple donated memorial funds given in honor of their son, Army Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Charles Johnson, who died in a helicopter crash in Iraq in August 2007.

According to CYFD’s website, its New Mexico Pre-Kindergarten Initiative is funded by CYFD and the state’s

Public Education Department. “Studies show that PreK is having significant, positive effects on children’s learning in the areas of language, literacy, and math skills,” the website states. “Children who attend PreK enter kindergarten knowing more letters, more letter-sound associations and heightened familiarity with words and book concepts.”

In announcing its expanded PreK program, Rehoboth officials cited statistics from CYFD, noting McKinley County, with 42.8 percent of its children living in poverty, is an area with a high need for quality early childhood programs. According to CYFD statistics, this is a nearly seven percent rise since 2007.

Rehoboth program

According to Bremer-Bennett, Rehoboth’s New Mexico PreK Initiative grant is for a period of three years.

Although students have to be four years old by Aug. 31, Bremer-Bennett said the grant does not allow enrollment for children who have already turned five, even if they have a late August birthday.

Because the preschool classes begin Tuesday, Bremer-Bennett encouraged parents to enroll their children soon. However, as long as openings remain, enrollment will continue.

Parents will need to provide transportation as no school bus service is provided for preschool students. Participation in the PreK Program also does not mean automatic acceptance into the school’s kindergarten program.

“Rehoboth Kindergarten has 20 slots open every year and every family has to apply using a different application form,” Bremer-Bennett said.

Interested parents should contact Lorretta Smith, director of admissions, at 505-726-9692 or lsmith@resnm.org.