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# Sunday Stories

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Facilities at First Presbyterian's Children's Center include low-built bookshelves and viewing windows in each classroom (right) with ample space for multiple learning centers and supervised activities. Plus, there's a fully fenced playground (above) where children can safely explore and play outdoors using a variety of equipment.



## First Presbyterian Church home to three-star children's center

By Suzi McKee

First Presbyterian Children's Center is a Christian organization, summoned to serve the community by providing a stimulating, nurturing and secure environment for children. It is widely regarded as one of the leading preschools in the area.

Tammy Hodge, director of the First Presbyterian Church's Children's Center, has always aimed for the stars, and her leadership since September 1999 has earned the center a three-star rating on the Star Quality Childcare Program Report Card since 2001.

A Dobyns-Bennett graduate who obtained a degree in human ecology and early childhood education, Tammy's professionalism has created a structure that is simply outstanding.

"The Waverly Road Presbyterian Child Care was used as a model for our Children's Center when it opened in 1996," Tammy began. "We have a highly qualified and experienced staff that is devoted to teaching our children Christian principles that they will carry with them throughout their lives."

The adult-to-child ratio exceeds the state of Tennessee standards, which means children receive the utmost in specialized care.

"Our center typically has a ratio of 4:1 for our infants and toddlers, and 6:1 in the pre-K classes," Tammy continued.

"Our curriculum is theme-based, with a vast array of opportunities for learning in centers, small groups and through exploration of our environment," Tammy explained. "All activities are age-appropriate and designed to help children experience the joy of learning, build friendships and increase self-esteem."

The Star Quality Program is a voluntary program designed to recognize, support and increase the quality of childcare providers throughout the state. The Tennessee Department of Human Services uses a one- to three-star scale over eight different categories. Director qualifications, professional development, developmental learning, parent/family engagement, ratio and group size, staff compensation, program assessment and child health and well-being are all included in the evaluation process.

"The quality of childcare has a direct impact on a child's ability to learn, to build healthy relationships, and to become the best they can be. The critical decision of where to place their child is often difficult and confusing for parents," Tammy explained. "And our Star Quality Report



Card helps parents to make a more informed and confident choice."

"Our facilities include low-built bookshelves and viewing windows in each classroom with ample space for multiple learning centers and supervised activities," Tammy continued.

"Our fully fenced playground allows children to safely explore and play outdoors using a variety of equipment. They can develop motor skills as they create friendships that will last a lifetime," she said with a smile.

Classes are 6 weeks to 12 months, 12 months to 2 years, 2 years to 3 years, 3 years to 4 years, and 4 years to 5 years. The tuition for children at FPCC is comparable to other similar programs. Currently, Tammy has a waiting list for additional children to enroll in the program.

First Presbyterian Church is located on Church Circle in downtown Kingsport. The church invites community members to "come and see" everything it has to offer.

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