

Young Fives preschool program to be offered at Solon Chabad

By MICHELE COLLINS
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Solon resident Irina Katsman was planning to send her daughter Lilah Khmelnitksy, 4, to kindergarten in Solon Schools next fall. But when she discovered that Solon City Schools had changed the date by which children have to be five years old from Sept. 30 to Aug. 1 to attend kindergarten, she discovered Lilah could no longer start this year. Lilah's birthday is in August.

She immediately called Lilah's preschool, Solon Chabad Jewish Preschool, and asked for help.

Ms. Katsman asked if the preschool could add a class for those like her daughter Lilah, "young five year olds."

With her recommendation, The Solon Chabad Jewish preschool is planning to add a new class for the fall, called Young Fives. Young Fives is for children who turn five years old in the summer or fall, but will not be attending kindergarten that year.

“We were able to organize the additional class to help parents who have “young five year olds,” shared Miriam Greenberg, director of the Chabad Jewish Center of Solon’s preschool programs. “We will have a program that offers the academic side as well as the social and play sides. We focus on fine motor skills, gross motor skills, pre-reading and writing as well as play. Children will come out of our program ready and confident to go to kindergarten.”

Lisa Dickerhoff, who has taught at the Chabad preschool for several years, will serve as the Young Fives teacher. She holds a master’s degree in education and in biological sciences, and has experience teaching kindergarten, second and third grades, in addition to teaching preschoolers.

Ms. Dickerhoff is excited for the new Young Fives program.

“I always incorporate experiments into our learning, and we do things like plant seeds in plastic cups while we are learning about growing crops,” she said. “We learn so much here, but it is often done through play. For the Young Fives we will expand our investigation into different topics and work on skills to prepare for their next steps.”

She added that she concentrates on preparing her students for kindergarten and beyond.

“We do things like work on being organized, we do shoe-tying, we actually have a curriculum for how to tie your shoes, we work on things like knowing your phone number and how to dial it,” she explained.

In fact, two preschoolers in the current pre-k program who will attend the Young Fives program next year, were eager to demonstrate their phone calling abilities, on a recent afternoon.

Lilah Khmelnitksy, 4, and Mia Skrikanic, 4, not only could read the numbers of their specific phone number card, they could sing a song that helped them remember their numbers, while they dialed them on a practice phone.

Solon Chabad offers preschool programs for two year olds, three year olds, pre k (4s) and now Young Fives. They also offer a flexible scheduling option that allows parents to have their students stay after preschool for lunch, and/or attend a before school or after school care program.

“Our Young Fives will meet Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., but they have the option to stay until 2:30 p.m, and have lunch. And the students can also attend before school from 7:30 a.m. or stay until 6 p.m, in the before and after school care program,” shared Mrs. Greenburg.

One thing both Ms. Dickerhoff and Mrs. Greenberg wanted to stress is that the preschool and Young Fives programs are open to all students.

“You do not have to be Jewish to attend our preschool, these programs are open to all,” said Mrs. Greenberg. “But since we are a Jewish-based preschool your child will learn about Jewish traditions and will be singing Hanukah songs and celebrating Shabbat.”

Ms. Dickerhoff added that one thing the preschool children really enjoy is making challah bread every Friday for Shabbat– another example of incorporating hands-on (and tasty!) activity into their learning.

While some preschool programs at the Solon Chabad Jewish Preschool are filled, there are still openings as of this writing in the Young Fives class. The class will be capped at 15 students. For more information, visit www.solonjewishpreschool.com.

