

PLAY-TO-LEARN

Bear Cub Club entertains, teaches

story by **Lisa Monti** photos by **John Stricklin**



TOP LEFT: CLUB DIRECTOR Kathy Burns entertains the kids while teaching “we learn to play and we play to learn.”

A lot goes on when the Bear Cub Club is in session at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center. The club is a weekly play date centered around storytelling, singing, dancing and fun interaction designed for newborns to five-year-olds. The full time version of the club is in its eighth year.

In a room filled with stuffed toys, books, puppets, a dollhouse, pull toys and puzzles, youngsters interact in lively sessions planned and led by club director Kathy Burns. “It’s a play-to-learn experience,” said Burns, a long time educator. “We learn to play and we play to learn.”

And while all those preschoolers playing and having fun might not look orderly, Burns laughingly assures parents, “There is order to this chaos.” Children are accompanied by a parent,

family member or caregiver. On any given day, the group is comprised of 12 to 64 adults and children.

Burns prepares a week’s worth of activities designed to keep the children entertained and engaged. “You can’t give them any down time,” Burns said. “It’s very structured and keeps their attention.” It’s amazing how many skills are in one day’s lesson plan, she said. While the Bear Cubs are having fun, they’re learning how to count, listen and follow directions as well as how to interact with others, among other skills.

And it’s not just a real-time learning experience, Burns said. “It’s what they take away and continue to do after they walk out the door. To the parents, we’re just having fun. It’s learning in a very relaxed environment, playing and learning at the same time.”

Parents are full of praise for the program and what it does to help their

children. As one parent wrote in a testimonial, her daughter “has learned so much and has grown so rapidly that I am confident Miss Kathy has set her up for success to become a preschooler and eventually a kindergartener. I truly love this program and am so thankful to have found it.”

The club is open to LMDC members and the first visit is free. Meetings are Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.



**Lynn Meadows
Discovery Center**
For Children

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