

Mooresville Tribune

"Although I Disagree With Everything You Say I Will Defend Your Right To Say It"

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Mrs. Combs conducts story time for three-year-olds, from left, Jonathan Ford, Michael Ferrell, Katy Lomas and Timmy Ferguson

Children's Children's Children Enrich Little Folks' Tradition

By HELEN KNIGHT

Mooresville Little Folks School in the 200 block of South Academy Street is providing day care for its third generation of children.

Mrs. Vivian Combs, its founder, still oversees the running of the school. In fact, she is involved hands-on in every phase of its daily operation, in spite of her 82 years.

Combs opened the Little Folks School here in 1954. For five years, the school was on North Main Street, where Combs lived. When she moved to 259 South Academy in 1959, the school moved with her.

By 1964, her home no longer could accommodate her growing enrollment. Another house was bought on the same street. Two years later, two more nearby buildings were added to the campus.

Today, the second house is licensed for 49 children, each building for 30 children. Combs' basement also is licensed for use as part of the school.

Little Folks School accepts children as young as three months and keeps them until, as Combs said, "they outgrow us."

For some children, this means 12 and 13 years of age. For them, beginning public school does not mean outgrowing Little Folks. Combs and her staff care offer before-school, transportation to school and after-school care for children of working parents.

Many Little Folks alumni never stop coming back, because their children and their children's children are there.

Children are assigned to different rooms according to age. This makes it easier for the staff to meet the needs of each age group. Infants through three-year-olds are in one building. They look forward to growing older to going "up on the hill," where the older children are based.

A trained staff of 12 looks after all the little folks. Most have years, even decades of experience, but all must complete 20 hours additional training per year. Even Combs is subject to this same requirement.

Combs originally trained as a teacher at Eastern Carolina Teachers College, now East Carolina University, long before public kindergarten was available. But after graduation she began working in a kindergarten, which was what she always had wanted to do.

After her own children were born, she spent some time working for the Family and Children Service, as well as some time substituting teaching. It was in about 1950, when Combs was living in Huntersville, that she started a kindergarten in her home.

After starting the Little Folks School here in town, Combs went back to school to finish her Early Childhood training. Over the course of several summers, she completed the training at East Carolina and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

At one point, Gov. James Hunt appointed Combs as a commissioner for the Department of Administration's Child Care Licensing Board, where she served two terms.

Over all the years Combs has worked in day care, she has seen many changes. For one thing, children used to start day care at age three, whereas now they are coming at three months.

Combs said she has noticed how "rules and regulations have become much stricter." She has also found that in some ways children have changed, to a certain extent because of the influence of television.

She explained how television increases children's awareness, so that they know more at a given age than they used to. Combs believes that too much television can be a bad thing.

"It's harder to hold their interest than it used to be because many of them watch so much television," she explained.

However, Combs sees changing times as a challenge, as changing needs must be met.

"We have to change with the times and change our programs," she said.

The program at Little Folks School allows for recreation and for learning. Children come to school at 8 a.m. and spend the first part of the day listening to a story and in free play. Each room has four centers: art, books, blocks and housekeeping.

Some times one of these centers can be substituted for "science," a very simple introduction to the subject that concentrates on nature. One of Combs' favorites is to choose a theme and study it a week. If the theme were blueberries, for example, this would involve learning about blueberries, reading a blueberry story, singing a

blueberry song, and finally at the end of the week, baking blueberry muffins.

The school provides a morning and afternoon snack, as well as a hot lunch. Eating together gives the children an opportunity to enjoy a variety of foods and to learn about table manners. After lunch, the children rest for a couple of hours in beds that the school provides for each child.

Afternoon activities include more free play and two hours outdoors, if the weather is appropriate. Parents collect their children any time between 4 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Combs believes that some attendance at day care is very important to a child's development.

"Reports show that a child who goes to a day care center has better attendance when he goes to public school," she said. "This is because he already has built up resistance to many of the childhood illnesses. Also, children like being together."

Combs feels day care provides a wonderful opportunity for children to learn how to interact. It also provides a good environment for early learning.

"We shouldn't try to take the place of the parents," she said, "but we teach here what every mother plans to do tomorrow because she didn't have time to do today."

Combs thoroughly enjoys her school. It is now many years since, as a child, she realized that working with children was to be her vocation. At church, she recalled, she sang "there's a place for everyone in the service of the King," but she was depressed because she didn't know what her place was.

One day, Combs heard her neighbor crying. She knew that the little boy was sick and that it was bad for him to cry so hard, so she went over to swing him on the porch, to stop him crying. It worked.

"It was the first thing I did for my Lord and Master," she said, "and ever since, every time I do something for a child, I feel closer to Him."

Of her years devoted to providing day care for little folks, Combs said:

"It has been a wonderful experience. I wouldn't take anything for the privilege I have had working with the children and knowing their families."

Combs still goes to the school all day, every day. She enjoys helping the other teachers and seeing the smiling faces of the children. As for thoughts of retiring, Combs has none.

"I'd miss the contact too much," she said. "As long as I have the health and enjoy it, I'll continue."

Hall Faces Two Charges In Break-In

A Troutman man has been charged with an incident in which he allegedly broke into the home of a Mooresville area woman and threatened her.

Robert Burton Hall, 23, of route 2, Troutman, has been charged with two counts of first-degree burglary and one count of injury to personal property.

According to Investigator J.M. Herman of the Iredell County Sheriff's Department, Hall is alleged to have entered a home at Route 9, Mooresville, twice on the morning of May 4.

The woman living at the residence reported that a man entered her house once at 4:45 a.m. and again at 5:15 a.m. He reportedly ransacked the home and threatened the woman.

Hall was released from the Iredell County Jail after posting a \$25,000 bond.



Another Travel/Tourism Display

The McDonald's restaurant on Plaza Drive is the newest display area for travel and tourism brochures featuring Mooresville, Lake Norman and the surrounding area. Wayne Frick, left, and Ron Johnson delivered the display rack to Melissa Neader, center, who along with Mike Neader owns and operates the local restaurant. Frick, left, director of the Mooresville Downtown Commissioner, and Johnson, chairman of the Mooresville-South Iredell Chamber of Commerce's Travel and Tourism Committee, have been staying busy in recent months delivering and restocking the brochure display cases.

Delta Chi Office For Brown

Richard Brown, son of Mr. and Mrs. Cansell D. Brown of 582 West Park Avenue, Mooresville, has been elected to the Executive Board of the East Carolina Colony of The Delta Chi Fraternity as Alumni Secretary.

Brown, a rising senior in the College of Industry and Technology, is a Founding Father of The Delta Chi Fraternity at ECU and a graduate of Mooresville Senior High School.

The Delta Chi Colony currently has 50 members at East Carolina and over 60,000 nationwide.

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