Parents spearhead fund-raiser, clean-up day at center.

The carpet is clean but worn and frayed in spots.

Scuff marks and nicks mar the doors to Building Blocks Child Care Center and Preschool and snow blows inside in the winter.

Enter two energetic parents of children who attend the center and you get a formula for a fund-raiser and a face lift mixed in with elbow grease.

On Saturday, June 4, Heidi Galas and Ann Scott have planned a garage sale at the center. The money raised will help buy paint, cleaning and other supplies, new carpet and windows, a new sign and materials for landscaping around the building.

Part of the landscaping includes the installation of permanent shade structures in the playground area.

EVENTS

What: Garage sale at Building Blocks Child Care Center and Preschool, 710 12th St.

When: Saturday, June 4, from 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Why: To raise money to clean and repair center, Saturday, June 11. Painting, repairing/caulking doors and windows, landscaping and more is planned.

Garage sale items can be dropped off at Building Blocks after May 30, between 6 a.m.-6 p.m., or by calling Heidi Galas at 529-1642 or Ann Scott at 529-1642.

Items not sold will be donated to Goodwill Industries or The Connection Homeless Shelter.

A week later, on Saturday, June 11, center staff, parents and other volunteers will gather at Building Blocks to paint, clean, landscape and spruce up the building in other ways as well as clean and repair toys.

Galas noted that the cleanup is also in conjunction with the 15-year anniversary of Building Blocks.

She said the center needs to maintain a fresh look so parents will continue to bring their children.

“We hope to attract more new customers here,” said Galas who serves on the Building Blocks board and whose 6-year-old attends the center. “Curb appeal is important.”

Scott has a 16-month-old she takes to the center. She said some parents have mentioned that the center needs a fresh look.

Community donations for the garage sale are being accepted and can be dropped off at the center Monday through Friday, from 6 a.m.-6 p.m. after May 30, or by calling Galas at 529-1642 or Scott at 529-1642.

Donations to buy materials or to support the center are also accepted as is in-kind labor.

For example, Gothenburg area resident Ginny Peterson will donate her time to paint a mural in the preschool room.

Galas and Scott said parents have organized several fund-raisers—through cookie dough and frozen food sales and a book fair—to raise almost enough money to pay for new carpet but not for installation.

The carpet in the center, Galas said, is from when Building Blocks was first constructed 15 years ago and has not been replaced.

Galas said her son, an only child, has received excellent care at the center.

She and her husband Chris send him there for socialization.

“He goes there at 6:30 a.m. and they walk him to school,” said Galas, who’s a nurse at Gothenburg Memorial Hospital.

Scott likes the fact that she can drop off her son early in the morning so she can drive to Hastings to take advanced nursing classes.

Both women agreed that the fund raising and clean up is a big undertaking.

“But we’re going to do it,” Galas said.

Center director Donna Portiner and assistant Terri Bruntz are elated about the fund-raiser and clean up day—the first big fund-raiser and clean-up generated by parents.

“We have good clientele now but we’d like to get more people to come and check us out.” Bruntz said.

Portiner agreed, adding that normal attrition means they lose kids each year.

As a result, new clientele is needed.

“We also want the day care to be nice for the kids who come here,” she said.

Bruntz noted that the 50 to 60 children who visit the center each week day cause wear and tear in and outside of the building.

Portiner said volunteers repainted the inside of the center about five years ago. The center has also replaced some windows, redone both bathrooms (parent volunteers did one), cleaned the carpet and installed a security system.

Volunteers also installed playground equipment and two years ago, put in rubber material underneath the equipment.

“But it’s tough since we’re non profit,” she said. “People don’t realize we pay for food for kids and that minimum wage increased a few years ago.”

The center employs six full-time and seven part-time workers—many of whom have worked there for more than 10 years.

“We don’t have huge turnover which is huge because kids and their parents get to know the staff,” Portiner explained.

Although the city owns and pays for insurance on the building, other expenses must be paid for with money generated from the children who attend the center.

The center is governed by an 11-member board.

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