



Mary Kaye Ervasti and husband Cal run the very successful Bridges Preschool in Rosemount. This past week kids at the Bridges have been busy making Mother's Day gifts. (Photo by Jason Strangs).



Kids at the Bridges Preschool in Rosemount had fun participating in a music lesson on Wednesday. The music teacher is Dawn Hauswirth (right).

To Mom, with love

Kids at Bridges Preschool in Rosemount make special presents for Mother's Day

By Jason Strangs

The best Mother's Day presents often come from children. That's because kids usually make their own personal gifts to give with love to their mother.

Many Mother's Day gifts were being made inside the Bridges Preschool House in Rosemount this past week. Some children were making handprints on paper while others were making Mother's Day cards.

"Almost every day we have arts and crafts projects," said Mary Kaye Ervasti, owner of the Bridges Preschool House. "The kids get to bring home the decorations that they made. We also display their art here."

To be sure, The Bridges Preschool is filled with many colorful decorations made by the children. About 30 kids were busy making Mother's Day gifts and other art projects on Wednesday.

Ervasti is helped out by her husband Cal and eight certified

teachers. "The teachers are the ones who work with the children," said Ervasti.

Most of the time it's fun time at the Bridges. It's even more fun and festive near special holidays like Mother's Day.

"We have parties for every holiday," said Ervasti. "In November we had a Thanksgiving feast. We had a big party at Christmas. We had a big St. Patrick's Day party and we sang Irish songs and had green treats. For Easter the kids colored Easter eggs. There seems to be something special every month."

Ervasti is looking forward to even more special events in the next few months. If the weather cooperates, Ervasti and her staff will be able to go outside with the preschoolers on sunny days.

"For spring, we are having a special teddy bear picnic," noted Ervasti. "We will have songs and games and stories. Hopefully we'll be able to go outside. We have a

big playground area. In the summer we plan lots of outside activities. We have games and races and we usually have a little carnival at the end of the summer."

The Bridges Preschool is open all year around. The ages of the kids at the Preschool are from two-and-a-half to 12. The Preschool is open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the week. "It's a very accommodating schedule for parents," said Ervasti.

Ervasti started the Bridges Preschool in 1973. "When I started I probably had about 40 kids," said Ervasti. "Now there are probably 100 kids that come in and out during the day. We get kids from Rosemount, Farmington, Eagan, Apple Valley -- all throughout Dakota County."

Ervasti said she tries to have a daily schedule for the kids. In the morning and early afternoon there

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are arts and crafts projects and games for kids. From 3:30 - 6 p.m. it's "play time," said Ervasti. Of course, there's also time for lunch, socializing and a rest time for the younger kids.

For Ervasti, there's rarely a dull moment at the Bridges. "We have activities that are constantly going on," she noted. "I like the variety. That's what keeps it from getting boring."

Throughout her 23 years working at the Bridges, Ervasti said she has tried to instill to the children "a love of life, a respect for one another, manners and a good set of values."

Her advice to mothers is this: "Treasure the years spent with your child, because they grow up so fast."

Ervasti is amazed that some of the kids she took care of in the

1970's are now grown up and have kids of their own. Some of those kids are currently at the Bridges. So Ervasti has taken care of two generations of family members.

Ervasti has three children of her own -- Justin, 20, Maria, 17, and Ellena, 13. Justin attends St. Thomas College, while Maria and Ellena attend Rosemount schools.

Most of Ervasti's family lives and works in Rosemount. Her brother, E.B. McMenemy, was the former Mayor of Rosemount.

Ervasti is looking forward to a big family celebration for Mother's Day. "We're going to be sharing

Mother's Day with Cal's mom and my mom and my family," she said. "We're going to have a picnic."

Ervasti plans on staying in Rosemount for many years to come. "I love this community," she said. "This is my home. I have a lot of roots here."