***Little Learners: Learning to Enjoy Life***

By Rande Davis

Mary Kuruppu’s path to opening Little Learners preschool and daycare center in Poolesville began about three years ago for highly personal reasons. She wanted to spend more time at home raising her children, and her youngest daughter was pushing for a new sibling to play with. As a math teacher at Frederick Community College, the equation for success seemed simple enough and led to her opening a daycare in the home. As that venture grew and her youngest daughter entered middle school, she was ready for the next step. This past winter she took over the facility that had been Children’s Towne Academy, located on Fisher Avenue near Cugini’s Restaurant.

Education is an essential part of the Kuruppu family. She holds a Master’s Degree in Engineering from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her husband is a chemist with Medimmune, son John followed her footsteps in engineering, and her oldest daughter is in her first year at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Although she and her four-person staff (Angela Knight, Corine Torry, Erika Trenard, and Elvire Cajuste) are all fully accredited for preschool and daycare, she credits her philosophy in child care as the most important aspect of Little Learners. “The most important thing is to enjoy the children, enjoy the time you are with them, b e a child in play with them. To do so leads to a relaxed and pleasant environment from which to teach the simple things like ABCs, numbers, fun facts, etc. By enjoying yourself and what you do, the day leads to a happy experience for the children.”

The facility has four classrooms: three to separate the different age groups (infant, toddler, and preschool) and a large, full-service room with educational games, crafts, books, and more. Over the winter, she renovated the playground with some new play equipment and safety features as well.

Open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., a typical day includes appropriate age-level learning, playtime, rest, and snack time with an occasional special visitor like a pony or a bunny.