

# Credit where credit is due

## ■ Fairfax's Main Street Child Development Center recognized by state officials

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SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX  
COUNTY TIMES

On June 17, the Main Street Child Development Center, located in the Green Acres Community Center in Fairfax, was paid a visit by Virginia Secretary of Education Anne Holton and Secretary of Health & Human Resources William Hazel.

According to the center, Main Street has been providing childhood education for at-risk students ages 2 to 5 years old and their families regardless of financial status since 1973.

As a nonprofit organization, the center collaborates with the state-funded Virginia Preschool initiative and the county-supported Child Care Assistance and Referral program to provide quality preschool for at-risk children.

"There is a bi-partisan consensus that we would like to provide early child hood education to all kids regardless of their zip code or circumstances," said Holton. "It's a complicated process doing so, with so many different funding streams, but Fairfax has been



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### A scene from a June 17 visit by state officials to Main Street Child Development Center in Fairfax.

a leader in this area."

At face value the preschool seems like any other, what sets it apart is the opportunity it provides and the families and children they work towards helping. The center operates on a full-day basis year round.

"It is truly a great experience seeing this program operate in person," said Holton.

The teaching staff at Main Street is comprised of "highly qualified teachers" said Jim Dempsey the development director of Main Street. "In addition, approximately 60 percent of students who attend Main Street

speak Spanish at home, so to accommodate this, Main Street has staffed almost all classrooms with teachers who are fluent in the Spanish language."

Main Street also works alongside George Mason University, integrating the "Mason LIFE" program into its daily operation by inviting students with intellectual and development disabilities to intern at the school assisting and working with the teaching staff.

"We are looking to see if we can't take this model and see if we can implement it elsewhere in the state of Virginia", said Hazel.