

## SUMMER MAD SCIENCE PROGRAMS BLAST OFF

By Tamas Mondovics



SUZANNA BARNA, 8, FRONT, WHO ATTENDS MAD SCIENCE OF TAMPA BAY AFTER-SCHOOL CLASSES AT THE OSPREY CLUB AT FISHHAWK RANCH IN LITHIA, SHOWS OFF HER PERISCOPE SHE AND HER CLASSMATES HAVE BEEN WORKING ON.

change.

"If science is fun and interesting, it motivates the students to learn more and pursue the subject with much more attention in school as well," Ciardiello said.

Pleased with what the program has

done for her child is FishHawk resident Beverly Barna, whose 8-year-old daughter Suzanna attends Mad Science after-school classes.

"The hands-on activities have truly opened up Suzanna's interest in science, and she enjoys the interaction with the instructor and the other children," Barna said.

FishHawk Ranch Mad Science Program Instructor Kali "Kinetic" Crum agreed when she said, "The children do enjoy the hands-on aspect of the class as science becomes more real and fun right in front of their eyes."

Currently after-school classes at the Osprey Club, located at 5721 Osprey Ridge Dr. in Lithia, are held on Wednesdays until May 6. Parents can register their children for the spring break camp at the Osprey Club on April 6-April 10 and for summer break camps scheduled for July 20-24 and August 1-4.

For more information about Mad Science, call 655-6643 or visit [www.madscience.org/tampabay](http://www.madscience.org/tampabay).

Magnetic magic, optical illusions, slime, sonic sound, tantalizing tastes, harnessing heat or building a rocket all have one thing in common: they are all part of the unique activities offered by Mad Science of Tampa Bay, a leading science enrichment program for children.

Mad Science is known for offering its large selection of after-school workshops, preschool programs and special events such as birthday parties, but now parents can also take advantage of enrolling their children in spring and summer break camp programs now offered.

Hillsborough and Pasco counties' Mad Science franchise owner and operator David Ciardiello believes in the endless benefits of the program.

"What the children learn and do during each class sparks their imagination, benefiting them far beyond the class," he said.

Ciardiello emphasized that while many young students may not find science in the traditional school setting interesting, after joining Mad Science their view of the subject is guaranteed to

## SCHOOLS READY FOR SUMMER VPK

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NADIA GILLIS, CENTER, WORKS WITH STUDENTS AT FISHHAWK EARLY LEARNING CENTER. THE SCHOOL IS ONE OF TWO LOCATIONS IN LITHIA THAT WILL BE OFFERING THE FREE SUMMER VPK (VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN) PROGRAM.

day will begin at 7:30 a.m. and end at 6 p.m.

ELCHC is encouraging parents to check with individual private providers regarding the times and start and end dates for their 2009 summer VPK programs, which are normally scheduled from 9-3 p.m. Monday-Friday.

FishHawk Early Learning Center owner Susan Rind is looking forward to welcoming the children this summer and spoke highly of the summer VPK program's benefits.

"This will be our

third year offering this program held at one of our three school facilities located at 6001 Parkset Dr. in FishHawk, adjacent to the FishHawk Creek Elementary School, and it is filling up fast," she said.

According to Rind, one of the main reasons for the success of the facility at FishHawk has to do with the fact that it provides a well-established, 300-instructional hour summer program curriculum with qualified returning teachers who bring the necessary experience to the program.

Tara Berg of La Petite Academy Cristina, also a summer VPK provider for children living in Riverview, Apollo Beach, Ruskin and surrounding areas, said the program curriculum is full of special events, including the ones the children already know well. "We will have story time, music and movements, writing, as well as arts and craft, just to name a few," Berg said.

A number of additional summer VPK providers include: Castles of Imagination on 820 Bryan Rd. in Brandon, La Petite Academy Cristina on 10025 Cristina Dr., Riverview Montessori School at 11520 Ramble Creek Dr. in Riverview, Brandon Montessori School on 4223 Lynx Paw Trl. and St. Mark Preschool on 2914 Lithia Pinecrest Rd. in Valrico.

Parents can register their children for the 2009 summer VPK program now.

For additional lists of summer school locations and VPK providers, please visit [www.elchc.org](http://www.elchc.org).

The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program was implemented and mandated by the Hillsborough County School District in 2002, under the direction of the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County (ELCHC), in order to give all of Florida's 4-year-olds access to a free, quality, pre-kindergarten educational experience.

"This is one of the best programs available for our children before entering kindergarten," said Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County CEO, Dave McGerald, adding that the coalition's summer VPK program is no exception.

McGerald explained that children who reside in Florida, who were born between September 2, 2003 and September 1, 2004 and are eligible to enter kindergarten in the fall of 2009 may participate in a summer VPK program, but if a child has attended a portion of a school year VPK program already, their eligibility may be affected.

"A 4-year-old can attend either program, but not both. Parents of children who have attended a portion of a school year VPK program should call to verify eligibility before registering for summer VPK," McGerald said.

Parents or legal guardians may choose from 24 elementary school locations and select private providers for the 2009 summer VPK program. In elementary schools, summer VPK begins Wednesday, June 10 and ends Thursday, July 30 and the program



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