

French-language day care to reopen ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

A Tilbury-based day-care operator is reopening a francophone child-care centre in Sarnia that closed last November.

Tilbury Tots Early Learning Centre is opening their 10th site in the former Les Petits Marins building, attached to Saint-Francois Xavier school in the Rapids Parkway subdivision.

Early childhood educator workers at Les Petits Marins spent six weeks caring for youngsters without pay before the centre closed in late November, due to a \$30,000 deficit.

Now many have a shot at coming back.

Several will be interviewed next week for jobs at Tilbury Tots, new ownership said. The centre is expected to open Feb. 21.

It's the agency's first day care in Sarnia-Lambton, part of a partnership with Conseil Scolaire de District des Ecoles Catholiques du Sud-Ouest.

The French-language day care is Tilbury Tots' fifth since opening in 1995.

A rubbish bin filled with wood and blue plastic play equipment waits outside, the last vestige of Les Petits Marins.

Inside, new play equipment is appearing in rooms, and new blinds rest on the floor in the office, yet to be put up.

An inspector with Smoke Free Ontario arrives and provides the owners with 'no smoking' signs.

It's exciting to open the new centre, said Tilbury Tots director Jody Bernier.

"There's definitely a need because as soon as word got out that we were possibly taking over, our phone was ringing off the hook."

Many parents with Les Petits Marins are bringing their youngsters back, she said. And there are new clients as well.

The centre will have space for 36 altogether - six infants, 10 toddlers, and 16 preschoolers.

It's full-time care from 6:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., she said, adding all staff will speak French.

Some policies will change, but the day-care will be similar to its predecessor, she said.

"The parents that we did speak to really advocated for stuff that was here previously."

It's not known former Les Petits Marins staff were ever compensated from the not-for-profit centre for their free labour.

An attempt to reach former centre president Guy Titley, an unpaid volunteer, was not immediately returned.

Parents with children at the centre thanked the nine staff for their help last year with gifts and donations.

Tilbury Tots' French child-care centres will be renamed soon, Bernier said. English centres will retain the Tilbury Tots name.

-reprinted from the Observer

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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