The Mary Jo Small Child Care Center At Brookland Woods

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MJSCCC at BW, located on the University of Iowa campus, has been providing a unique childcare experience for children, ages 2 years through 5 years, since 1989. We are licensed to care for 28 children, and we offer a variety of enrollment options (Full Time, 3 Days/week, 2 Days/week, mornings, afternoons).

We changed our name from Brookland Woods Child Care to The Mary Jo Small Child Care Center at Brookland Woods in 1999, to honor Mary Jo Small upon her retirement from the University of Iowa. During her career, Mary Jo Small devoted herself tirelessly to issues concerning women, children and families. With her support, child care on campus grew and flourished. We feel it is important to remember and honor her work and legacy.

It is our belief that childhood development occurs along a continuum and that each child progresses along this continuum at their own unique pace. Because we trust that children's individual and collective interests in play and socialization are at the heart of what children need to do, we are consciously and deliberately child-centered and open-ended. Our program is designed to support the idea of play as the primary and legitimate business of children. Children are constantly exploring and observing their environment. Every day, and every play encounter, is a learning opportunity for each child, and these experiences help shape the person they are becoming. We believe that an encouraging, open-ended, child-centered, multi-faceted play environment maximizes each child's potential as they grow into well rounded, healthy, happy, creative people. Our objective is to validate each child's individuality, to facilitate emerging friendships, and to encourage each child's evolving interests.

Our belief in this natural and evolving developmental process is the basis for our program philosophy. We provide many child-centered, open-ended play opportunities and lots of caring adults. Every day the children and staff create new and interesting play experiences with familiar materials in our thematic program rooms. The children come and go to each room/activity as they wish, while our staff stay positioned in specific rooms supervising and facilitating. Unlike traditional child care centers where children are assigned groups and are moved around by their teachers, our children move themselves around – individually, with a friend, or in a larger group. Because they are participating in the various room activities when they want, with whom they want, and for as long as they want, our children are always doing something they like! The result is a lovely atmosphere of happy children engaged in productive play.

At The Mary Jo Small Child Care Center at Brookland Woods, we play outside as much as we can, whenever the weather permits. We have an expansive outdoor play space surrounded by old trees, lots of nature sounds and sights, and an historically preserved wooded ravine. The equipment and toys outside are basic and open-ended, designed to encourage physical, social, and cognitive development, along with endless possibilities for imaginative play. We have lots of sand and sand toys, climbing structures, swings, slides, a jumping tire, and a tree house. The children play in the area of their choice while our staff are positioned throughout the yard to provide companionship, assistance, and supervision.

Our activities are not teacher-directed but our staff are active and involved. They are responsive, interactive, and interested. Whether we are playing inside or outside, the staff in each program area are facilitating and mediating, while the children engage in the activities and social relationships of their choosing. The staff play with the children and encourage them to play with each other. Staff intervene and assist when there is a need for guidance and support. We intentionally model good manners, empathy, creative problem solving, and win-win conflict resolutions. We staff our program at a ratio of 1 adult to 6 children. We always follow the current state of Iowa staffing guidelines for two- year -olds, since our program encourages children of all ages to play together. Multi-age play opportunities are an important component of our program.

Our program is staffed by a Director, Morning Coordinator, 2 Senior Staff, and numerous part time University of Iowa of Iowa student staff (many of whom are gaining valuable field experience as they work towards a degree in education, social work, nursing, and other related fields). Some of our student staff have stayed with our program beyond their studies at The University of Iowa, taking on additional responsibilities and mentoring new student staff. Our enrolled children develop very close bonds with all of our staff, and they enjoy seeing the daily variety of fresh faces; each unique and each arriving with a happy, ready-to-play attitude. Our energetic and diverse staff are essential to the success of our child-centered approach, and parents consistently cite our staff as one of their favorite aspects of our program. Some of the children that we have cared for in years past have gone on to work at MJSCCC at BW during their University of Iowa college experience! And some of our former part time student staff are now parents whose children attend our program! Our program has enjoyed a lot of these full circle moments during our 35+ years of operation.

We are committed to providing an exceptional child care experience here at The Mary Jo Small Child Care Center at Brookland Woods. And we are committed to nurturing children's unique developmental growth while also respecting their individuality.

We are a community of small and not so small persons, who spend their days learning about the world as well as each other and ourselves.

We sincerely appreciate your interest in our child care program.