

For the kids



Baskin child center opens at Cabrillo

By DONNA KIMURA

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APTOS — The Jack and Elena Baskin Child Care Center, the first building constructed entirely from private donations at Cabrillo College, opened Friday.

The center nearly doubles the capacity of the college's existing child-care service, which can now accommodate as many as 100 children ages 18 months to 5 years.

The new building also features Santa Cruz County's first specially equipped central site where suspected child abuse victims will be interviewed.

"A child-care center is something we needed for a long time," said college President John Hurd.

A lack of child care can be a barrier to education, added Nancy K. Brown, children's center director and an early childhood education instructor.

The center will serve parents who could not attend college without child care, she said. Fees range from about \$180 to \$600 a month, but students may apply for financial assistance.

The center's services are also available to college staff and faculty as well as the public.

A total of \$800,000 was raised for the project. Jack and Elena Baskin provided the initial gift of \$350,000, which paid for construction of the center.

Elena Baskin died in September.

Years ago, she attended San Mateo Community College as a single mother before transferring to Stanford University. Baskin recalled those days last year when the gift was announced.

"I had no money," she said then. "I needed to get myself on my feet. ... Had there been a child-care center, life would have been easier."

She and her husband wanted to make it easier for other parents going to school.

Not only did Jack Baskin, a retired builder, contribute funds for the cottage-style building, he was often found on campus at 7:30 a.m. in the morning checking on the project.

While many families will use the center for their

routine child-care needs, a room has also been built to help youngsters who may be victims of child abuse.

The county District Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office, Watsonville Police and the Child Abuse Prevention Center were strong supporters of creating the interview center. It was built with a \$30,000 gift from Capitola-Aptos Rotary.

A suspected child-abuse victim may have to be interviewed as many as a dozen times, according to Brown. The center will reduce the number of interviews to as few as one, she said.

The room is equipped with a two-way mirror which will allow investigators to watch an interview from the next room. Sessions can also be videotaped.

"It will minimize the trauma to kids who have already been victimized," said District Attorney Art Danner.

Danner said the work done at the center will make prosecutors' cases stronger by allowing better interviews with the children, who are often now interviewed in sterile rooms at police stations.

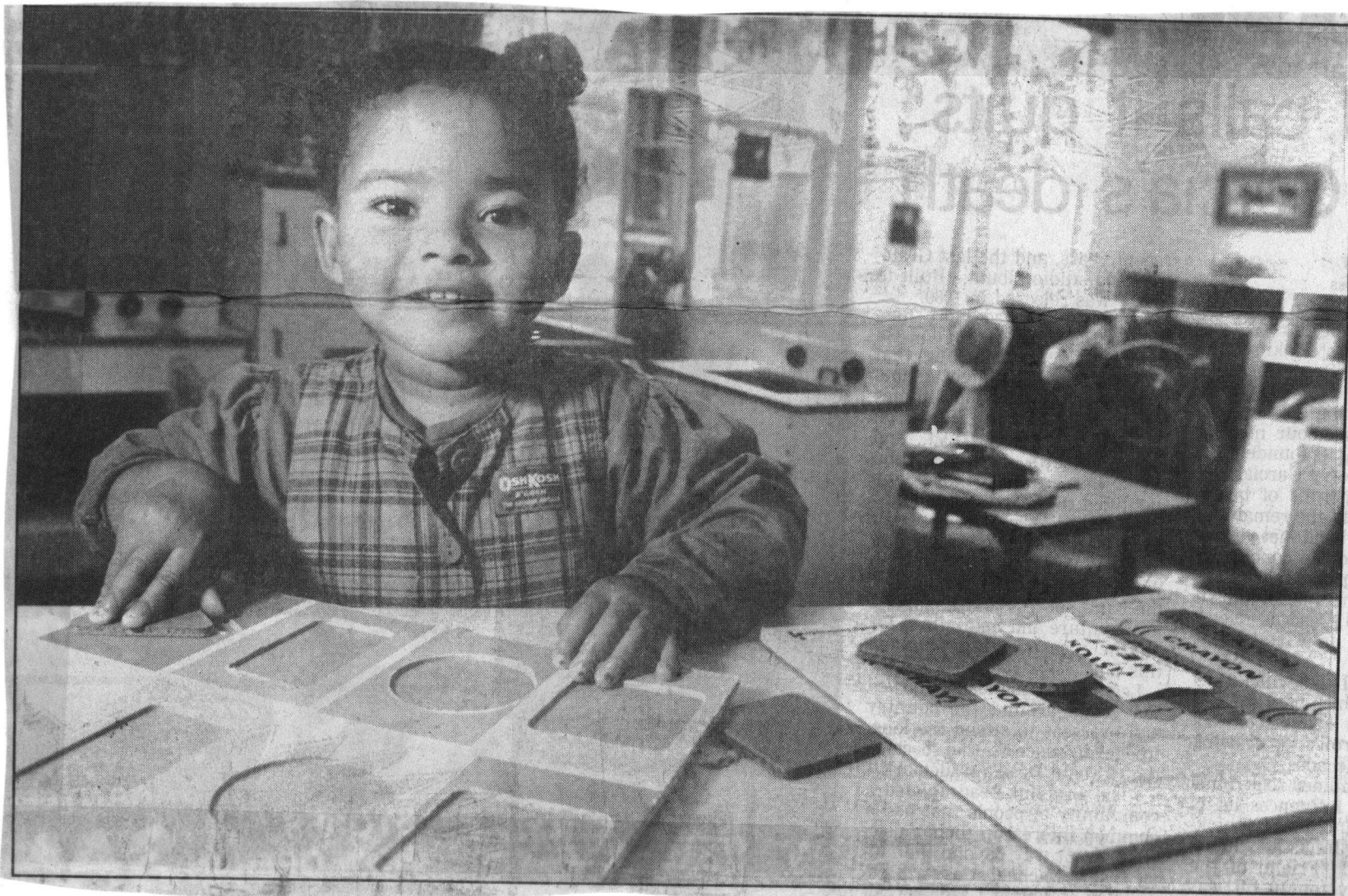
"Our people are doing a good job, but this is going to make it better," he said.

A twist of fate allowed the room to become part of the Baskin center. Danner was having lunch with President Hurd and Cabrillo College Foundation Executive Director Beverly Grova when the conversation turned to the building of the child-care center.

Danner wondered if it could also be a place abused children are interviewed. Cabrillo officials checked with planners and gave law enforcement agencies a week to come up with the extra money, subsequently provided by the Rotary Club.

Prior to that, Danner said he thought such an interview site was two or three years away. He said he expects all local police agencies to use the new room.

The Baskin child-care center is part of Cabrillo's 35th Anniversary Fund Raising Campaign. The goal of the campus is to raise \$5 million in three years. The Cabrillo College Foundation has raised \$3.8 million toward that goal.



Bill Lovejoy/
Sentinel photos

Top,
Casondra
Shea wrestles
with a sock at
the new
Baskin Child
Care Center at
Cabrillo
College Friday
morning.
Bottom,
Alexis
Bogedy
enjoys a
puzzle in a
center
classroom.