

THE CARY NEWS



Special day of baseball

Cedar Fork Elementary holds its own 'miracle league' game.

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Fit to be tied

Carolina can't protect lead and draws again.

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CARY, NORTH CAROLINA

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Where do the children play? This couple knows

"We tried to concentrate on a unique environment."

EDMUND HOHLS
Co-owner of Planet Child in Cary

BY VALERIE MARINO
STAFF WRITER

Sebastian Hohls has the world's greatest playground.

In one corner is an African safari complete with a child-size off-road vehicle and painted hut. Around the corner is an aquatic tunnel, a grocery store, school house and even a pirate ship.

Sebastian's playroom isn't any normal place. It's called Planet

NAMES&FACES

Child, a children's activity center in Cary dreamed up by his parents, Apex residents Persephone and Edmund Hohls.

The couple decided to open Planet Child after they noticed a lack of such venues for their own children, Sebastian, 2, and Angelina, 4.

"I was always looking for something for them to do. I was always driving them somewhere," Persephone said. "I thought of doing this to help the mothers who were in a similar situation to me."

The couple spent a year researching children's centers worldwide.

"Japan has some great facilities," Edmund said, noting that the idea for their aquatic tunnel, where chil-

ren can crawl through to look at sand, shells and different sea creatures, came from an exhibit there.

From the start, the couple wanted to distinguish their play center from other children's centers.

"A lot of the places are really cheesy," Edmund said. "We tried to concentrate on a unique environment."

Since opening near the intersection of Kildaire Farm and Tryon

roads in early February, Planet Child has had hundreds of children come through to play and explore the various exhibits. Preschools, churches and the YMCA have even brought children through for field trips.

"It really is a neat place," said Bill Youngblood, who brings his granddaughter Katie to Planet Child

SEE HOHLS, 2A

BREAKING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

Learning English — and everything else

As the population of western Wake and the rest of the Triangle continues to grow dramatically, it is becoming increasingly diverse, with people of all different backgrounds moving here.

As we continue our series about how foreign-speaking residents are breaking the language barrier to improve their quality of life here, we take a look at the children. Many children soak up a second language like a sponge — but the language isn't the only challenge they encounter. Cultural differences can be just as strong.

BY VALERIE MARINO
STAFF WRITER

When the Choudhury family moved to North Carolina from Bangladesh in 1998, they had the same reasons as many families: better education and more opportunities.

Nine years later, with their second daughter getting ready to start college, the Cary family has begun to realize those dreams.

"We are lucky we came here," said Shahin Choudhury, the family's patriarch.

Three of Shahin's brothers had moved to the United States before he came with his wife, Helen, and daughters Tahia, Talbia and Tahiti.

Like many children who come to Wake County from other countries, the Choudhury's daughters did not speak English.

Shahin, who has a degree in engineering from Bangladesh, was still unable to find a job in that profession once moving to North Carolina.

"In our country it is hard to find jobs," Shahin said. But he said even with his schooling, "here I cannot get good job."

Shahin and his wife both work at the Austin Quality Foods plant in Cary.

Shahin has thought about going back to school, but "It is hard to maintain job and family and go to Wake Tech," he said.

His daughters, he said, will be afforded more opportunities with their American educations and ease with the English language that they have

SEE CHOUDHURYS, 7A



PHOTO BY RAY BLACK II FOR THE CARY NEWS

The Choudhury family, from left, Talbia, Helen, Shahin, and Tahia, came to the United States from Bangladesh. Tahiti Choudhury is not pictured.

Smiles and milestones



PHOTOS BY TAYLOR TEMPLETON FOR THE CARY NEWS
Davon Davis receives his diploma while his uncle, Wendell Williams, looks on. Davis suffered respiratory failure in March and was hospitalized. He still managed to complete his required coursework. "I'm a champ of the whole world," he said.

Green Hope High School

No. of graduates: 525

Class quote: "Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and make a trail." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Words to remember: Class valedictorian Bhumi Purohit advised her classmates to go forth in life with great enthusiasm and zeal. "Live out your dreams because greatness and success are born of passion," were her words of encouragement to her fellow peers as they all prepare to take on life after high school.

Standing ovation: Included in principal Dr. James Hedrick's speech to the graduating class of seniors was a personal recognition of one student in particular. Although Hedrick bragged of the six state championships won by Green Hope in the past three years and the nearly \$4,000 in scholarships awarded to this senior class alone, he seemed most proud of senior Davon Davis for his personal accomplishment. Davis had been hospitalized this past year, and despite major setbacks and grave obstacles, he still graduated on Saturday with a standing ovation from the entire audience.



The Green Hope High School class of 2007 waits in anticipation at Reynolds Coliseum.

Davis' efforts demonstrate the message of perseverance and enthusiasm that was so popular throughout the speeches that day. A huge "congratulations" went to Davis and his family for his outstanding example of courage and strength.

— Ariana Siporin

INSIDE Apex, Athens Drive, Cary and Middle Creek high schools hold graduation ceremonies. PAGES 10-11A

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