

Quality Connections hosting grand opening celebration for new program Evergreen Academy Preschool

Evergreen Academy Preschool is a training center for qualified workers with disabilities preparing for careers in childcare and a free benefit for QC employees.

FLAGSTAFF, AZ, USA, April 21, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The disability services nonprofit [Quality Connections](#) (QC) is hosting a grand opening celebration for their new program, [Evergreen Academy Preschool](#) on Friday April 29, 2022 from 10:00am to 12:00pm in the YMCA building at 1001 N. Turquoise Drive in Flagstaff. The event will include fun activities for kids, tours of the facility, refreshments, and door prizes, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11:00am.



Evergreen Academy Preschool students are excited for their graduation from preschool.

Evergreen Academy Preschool teaches children the love of learning while preparing qualified workers with disabilities for careers in the childcare industry. Evergreen's services are provided as a free employment benefit for Quality Connections' entry level workforce, helping to eliminate a barrier that prevents many parents of young children from working. Evergreen Academy Preschool is licensed by the State of Arizona and enrollment is open to the public.

"High-quality affordable childcare can be really hard to come by these days", said Armando Bernasconi, Quality Connections' Co-founder and CEO. "We see it with the people who come to us for help with employment, and we see our own team struggling with it as well." Quality Connections provides vocational training services to people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, and directly employs over 120 people in the Flagstaff area through its programs.

According to a [2021 US Chamber of Commerce Foundation report](#), Arizona lost over 1,000

childcare providers between 2018 and 2020. COVID-19 has increased the instability and disproportionately affected rural communities, low income families and working women, and is costing the state an estimated \$1.8 billion annually due to absences, employee turnover costs and lost tax revenue.

“If we can help parents get to work, it helps them contribute to the economy and to our community,” says Bernasconi. “When more people are able to contribute, we all benefit – the whole community reaps the rewards. We may not be able to solve the childcare crisis for everyone, but if we can help ease the burden for our members and employees, perhaps we can provide a model that lights the way for other businesses to follow in our footsteps.”

Shauna Manygoats is a lifelong Flagstaff resident, and works as an Instructor in Quality Connections’ Montessori-based adult day program, QC Learning. With four young children in her household, Manygoats says without the childcare provided by Evergreen Academy Preschool, “I probably would not be working. I would be at home, but now I am able to work.”

“

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childcare provider while working toward an Associates Degree in Child Development from Rio Salado Community College. At Evergreen Academy Preschool, Peppard will share equal duties with her co-teacher, creating lesson plans, leading her students in activities and much more, while mentoring others following in her footsteps.



An Evergreen Academy Preschool student having fun with foam.

“They just love it so much”, said Shauna. Her oldest son had delayed speech when he began attending Evergreen Academy Preschool in the summer of 2020. “They taught him to talk”, she said of her son who is now speaking in full sentences. “I make friends”, her son says, and according to his mom, “he talks about them all the time!”

One of the program’s new teachers is Catherine Peppard. With help from Quality Connections’ vocational training program, Peppard earned her Early Childhood Education certificate from Coconino Community College and has gained experience working as an aide for another local

“She deserves this chance and I know she will do an amazing job,” said Kelly Arnold, Evergreen’s Director. “We will be there to guide her along the way and she has our full support. With Catherine's experience and education, we believe she will make an amazing co-teacher, and that is what we started this program for. We see the potential and fuel it!”

About Quality Connections Quality Connections Inc. is an Arizona not for profit 501(c)(3) corporation helping people with disabilities and disadvantages become independent, productive members of the community since 1999. Quality Connections provides vocational training services, Montessori-based adult day program,

and residential programs that build skills, confidence, and increased independence of people with a wide range of disabilities and disadvantages. Quality Connections is an Arizona Qualifying Charitable Organization. To learn more visit qualityconnections.org or call 928-773-8787

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