



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Makynzie Rowell, 1, plays on the slide at the Dallas Indoor Play Park at Dallas First Presbyterian Church on Friday morning. The play park is open Tuesday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and offers a place for kids to play — and parents to socialize — without dealing with the winter weather.

Dallas Indoor Play Park lets kids, parents mingle

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas Indoor Play Park at Dallas First Presbyterian Church rings with the sound of children playing.

The chorus of cheerful voices — well, mostly — may sound like controlled chaos to the uninitiated, but to the grandparents, parents and caregivers who belong to the playing children, it's like music to their ears.

Dallas Indoor Play Park is open from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays.

It fits in perfectly with Veronica Stuller's schedule, who has been using the park for almost two years. She brings her daughter, Aubrie, and the two children she watches, Dylan and Delilah.

"It keeps me sane," she said. "It's really nice because I do daycare, so I have two other kids who are here. It's nice because they eat breakfast. They come here, they play and we go home have lunch."

After that, it's nap time, and all the play helps with that.

"They go down so much easier," she said, smiling. "It's so nice."

Children pre-k and younger are welcome to use the park, which features a variety of slides, playhouses, tricycles and play cars, toys, games and craft projects. A \$1 donation is asked, but children are welcome to play free. Parents or caregivers are required to supervise while their children are there.

Open during the rainy months of the year, the park offers another benefit.

"Here in the Willamette Valley with all the rain and muckiness, sometimes the park outside isn't ideal to go out and play, so this is a

Playtime!

What: Dallas Indoor Play Park.

Where: Dallas First Presbyterian Church, 879 SW Levens St.

When: 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Contact: 503-623-3397.

Of note: \$1 donation is requested, but children 5 and younger are welcome to play free. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

place for kids to run a little energy out," said Jennifer Hasbrouck, a parent.

Stuller added it's a stress-free environment where parents can trust their children are safe.

"It's nice for moms to be able to hang out with other moms and know that our kids can't get into something," she said. "I don't take her (Aubrie) to other houses that I know are not baby-proofed, because you don't get to spend any time talking. Here they run free and you can actually sit and enjoy mom time."

Tawnya Kreft, the church's secretary, said the play park has several families who come regularly and is trying to organize to serve more.

"It changed from a club format where people were paying dues to more a gift to the community from the church," she said. "It's not a church event; it's space that's available that the church would like the com-

munity to be able to use for their children."

Kreft said the park tries to help families with other needs beyond a well-earned break for parents. "We do try to connect people to the resources in the community," Kreft said. "If there is a problem or an issue about homelessness, we are able to direct them to different agencies in the community and resources."

Hasbrouck said parents are forming a board and working on outreach via its Facebook page and advertising. In January, the group hosted its first family activity night at the church, celebrating the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. The play park offered child care and activities during the event.

She said they would like to host events monthly.

"We would like to have more opportunities like that to help the community," she said.



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Delilah, left, and Aubrie, right, are regulars at the play park, accompanied by Aubrie's mom, Veronica Stuller. As a daycare provider, she said the park "keeps me sane."



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Toy cars, tractors, tricycles, play houses and slides are among the toys available at the play park. Children can explore their creativity at a craft table, too.