

Back to the future: Lemieux and Sivright combine a passion for excellence in early childhood education and senior living as directors of a new school to open in October.

All Seasons preschool will open this fall, with a mission that reflects the social fabric of the past. All Seasons will feature an intergenerational program, with a curriculum that brings young children and seniors together. The school will be housed in Inver Glen Senior Living, a new green/LEED-certified building, (“Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design” designation) set amid rolling woods in Inver Grove Heights.

We believe that the quality of life is enhanced when all generations live and work together, declares the philosophy behind the school. This is a long held belief for Amy Lemieux, whose vision sparked the school’s beginning. The Lemieux family has provided high quality care for seniors in the community for over 40 years. Amy and co-director, Sarah Sivright, who has been a teacher and director of early childhood programs for over 20 years, have witnessed what seniors and young children have to offer each other, and think “a preschool and senior living community are a perfect match!”

The increasing senior population and sharply decreasing outdoor opportunities for young children have focused All Season’s mission on nature education, as well as intergenerational programming. Preschoolers and seniors will enjoy landscaped walking paths, a variety of gardens, and places to explore in the wooded areas around the school. Art has a central place at All Seasons, as well. The school’s beautiful art studio will provide creative outlets for both seniors and preschoolers, and be one more opportunity for them to work together.

The research to support intergenerational programming is strong and consistent. Young children need the wisdom and patience of the older generation and old people need the innocence and vitality that only a young child can offer. Long-term studies show lasting benefits to young and old living and working together. Children who spend a significant amount of time with senior adults demonstrate improved vocabulary and advanced social skills, particularly in the areas of inclusiveness and empathy. In the older population, boredom, loneliness, and helplessness are alleviated. Psychologist and author, Mary Pipher, writes, “*Many communities are realizing the value of projects that connect the young and the old. Older people are often wiser and less stressed than the rest of us and they have time and patience.*”

The school’s program will offer both full and part-day classes for three to five year-olds. Check the school’s website for more information: www.allseasonspreschool.net or call Amy Lemieux at 651-450-0606.

An informational open house with story hours and children’s activities, will be held Saturday, July 25, from 10:00-4:00 P.M. in the Discovery Room of the Lebanon Hills Visitor Center. Visit Amy and Sarah at the school’s on-site marketing trailer on Mondays and Thursdays from 9:30-11:30.

Again, Mary Pipher:

“Communities are real places with particular landscapes, sounds, and smells. Particular people live there and everyone knows their names. Children need to grow up surrounded by adults who care for them.”