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New Learning Center For Taney County's Children

BRANSON, Mo.— The ribbon was cut Tuesday on a new learning center in Taney County designed to help children whose parents are dealing with addiction to drugs and alcohol, although their services are available to anyone.

The Frances Rittenhouse Learning Center for Children offers daycare and preschool for children from six weeks of age as well as a summer tutoring program for school-aged children up to age 18.

Rittenhouse, who has worked for Church Army Branson for three years, is a longtime child development educator and co-founder of the Parents-As-Teachers program who directed those programs for 12 school districts.

The services are especially important in Taney County, which ranks near the bottom of child welfare statistics in the annual Missouri Kids Count survey, said Branson Mayor Raeanne Presley. Presley attended the ribbon cutting conducted by representatives from the Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce.

“We can never thank (Rittenhouse) enough for the difference she will make in every child, and we will become a community transformed,” Presley said.

The Learning Center is state-licensed for eight infants and toddlers, eight two-year-olds and 43 children ages three and up. They also provide Kids Café meals for anyone 18 or younger.

The staff also offers free life-skills classes for parents including GED instruction. Parenting with Love classes are held each Tuesday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., and anyone is welcome.

The Learning Center receives support from the Missouri Children's Trust Fund for child abuse prevention.

“Strong and stable families are a community's best asset,” said Trust Fund Program Coordinator Laura Malzner, who attended the ceremony.

The brightly decorated center is located at 212 State Highway T, near the junction of Missouri 76 east of Branson. Call 417-334-0586.

For additional information about the Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau, visit www.bransonchamber.com or call 800-296-0463.