



## The miracle of learning starts early at WSU

By Gene Schabath

It's a day filled with small miracles at Wayne State University's Child Development Lab. A day typical of most others.

At a table in the center of the Cocoon Room, pre-schooler Cullen Rudd puts the final touches on a make-believe pizza pie, slopping yellow and orange paint on an eight-inch round paper plate.

Three other children in the room are gleefully engaged in an impromptu game of tossing plastic pegs. In one corner near the windows, Julia Jacovide and Emily Moreno giggle with delight as they play in the kitchen, making "food" on a play wooden range.

It's also typical that Jourdan Ash is engrossed in a computer game about a dog named Ruff — on a high-speed computer. Jourdan maneuvers the computer mouse with great dexterity, clicking the arrow to activate different characters and functions in the game.

And when is the last time you heard of day-care children going to the Detroit Institute of Arts or the Amtrak station as part of their learning experience? These are just a few of the reasons that WSU's child development lab is one of the top-rated day-care learning centers in the state and boasts a one-year waiting list.

The center, administered by the department

of psychology, celebrates its 50th anniversary next year. The metamorphosis from its early days to 1995 is as impressive as going from crayons to computers. The child development lab clearly is not your mother's day-care center.

When it started 50 years ago, it was in the Wayne State Home Economics Department. It was a half-day nursery school housed near campus. Now it's open five days a week from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"Children are stimulated to grow and learn in our center because of the environment," says Elizabeth Marriott, director of the child development lab. "Children want to learn. This is more than a child day-care center in the traditional sense. We don't want our children just to be watched over. They need an enriched learning environment."

The child development lab, which boasts a teacher-to-child ratio of 7-to-1 (compared with the state average of 10-to-1) is one of the few nationally accredited day-care centers in Michigan. Out of nearly 17,300 licensed day-care facilities in the state, fewer than 100 are accredited. Nationwide, fewer than 2 percent

ever achieve accreditation.

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