

PLAY IS THE WORK OF A CHILD

Linda Eitmann, Director of St Paul's Lutheran Church PreSchool, and Jane Duysen, Administrative Assistant, visited with club members about the great success of the church mission in preschool child development and education. The preschool was created three years ago in a house for ministerial staff on St Paul's property. Enrollment has grown from 17 to 44, the current capacity of the facility. Play is the work of a child, Eitmann noted. Preschool children develop rapidly and teaching involves a lot of organized social interaction and motor skill development through play exercises for the 3-4 year old children plus kindergarten preparation for the 4-5 year old children. There are three teachers plus two substitute teachers and an administrative assistant on the school staff. Eitmann stated they need another class room to accommodate enrollment requests. The preschool has earned a Rating 3 of the Iowa Quality Rating scale, and an outdoor class room area is planned to enhance the teaching program. School funding is mostly from tuition paid by parents (81%). Specific fund raising activities, grants, and memorials provide the remaining funding, Eitmann explained. Preschoolers do a service project each month. They have planted flowers in front of the post office and they have helped stock food products at the Treynor Food Pantry for examples. Eitmann explained she strives to help the children develop a love for learning by providing a nurturing environment with many learning opportunities. She is often asked about daily childcare services including before and after school and there seems to be a strong need for this by young parents. The preschool governing board elected from church members will have to address any extension of the church mission to this service. Eitmann noted the preschoolers have a lot of energy and it rubs off on the teachers. Eitmann displayed a banner prepared from handprints of children in the preschool.