

# Palmetto Prep breaks ground near Simpsonville

Private childcare center set to open in March 2004

BY LEIGH SAVAGE  
community editor

When educators Ronald Peterman and Kathleen Gow couldn't find exactly what they wanted in a childcare provider, they decided to take matters into their own hands.

The result is Palmetto International Preparatory School, which broke ground on Sept. 9 and is slated to open its five-acre Woodruff Road campus in March 2004.

Both Peterman and Gow, who met as third-grade teachers at Oakview Elementary, have young children, and "on numerous occasions, we discussed our childcare needs," Gow says. "We wanted a preschool environment that had a good, strong educational base, but we also wanted extended hours and infant and toddler care."

Palmetto Prep will serve children

from 3 months old through kindergarten when it opens, and will then expand to teach first and second grades. Additional grades may be added in the future.

Peterman points out that the quality of early childhood care has been cause for concern in Greenville County.

"I was reading the other day that the average pay for folks [in early child care] is \$6.90 an hour," Peterman says. "We are looking to definitely provide them with better pay than that — and with certified teachers, we will need to do that. We will go above the industry standard."

Certified teachers will follow a curriculum that encourages real-world applications, and healthy living will be promoted through a catered food service program and indoor and outdoor recreation programs.

The facility will hold 270 students in its 19,000-square-foot facility, and

Peterman says he expects 75-100 children to enroll in the school's first year. Ten

children have already been enrolled.

Key features include an "International Marketplace" that offers hands-on, real-life practice in mathematics, geometry, history, science and geography. The facility, designed by DP3 architects, will also include a computer lab, language lab, theater, library, gymnasium, music room, art studio and a barbershop.

Outdoor recreation areas will include age-appropriate playgrounds, a water play area and a garden.

Cindy Weathers, director of marketing, says Palmetto Prep hopes to establish good relationships with private schools in the area.

"We see ourselves really as a feeder school into other private schools," she says. "When kids graduate from our school, they should be fully prepared to go to the public or private school of their choice."

Gow agrees that relationships with private schools will be important, and stresses that students heading for public schools will also benefit.

"There are plenty of quality programs out there, both public and private, for older kids and for the age we serve," she says. "The difference is the facility we are offering, and the extended hours, and the fact that we cover infant and toddler care."

The Woodruff Road location was chosen because of the lack of private childcare in the area and the growing population of young families, Gow says.

"We looked for where there was need, where that younger age group wasn't being accessed," she says.

The facility will have a staff of approximately 20 when it opens, with about 12-15 childcare providers and the remainder support staff. As the school grows, she expects the staff to blossom to 50-60 employees.

Class sizes will be kept small, with student-teacher ratios ranging from 1:4 for 3 months through 2 years to 1:12 for kids ages 6 and up.

In addition to basic child care, Palmetto Prep plans to offer an after-school kids club and a summer camp. For more information, call 675-1002 or log on to [www.palmettoprep.com](http://www.palmettoprep.com).



Co-founder Kathleen Gow and daughter Mackenzie break ground for the new Palmetto International Preparatory School.

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