

School district lauds extended day program

By Jennifer Kohlhepp
Managing Editor

ROBBINSVILLE — The Robbinsville Extended Day (RED) program has now been enriching children's lives for three years.

RED offers before and after school care as well as academic, enrichment and fun experiences as part of an independent venture designed to meet the twin goals of increasing revenue for school programs and providing meaningful experiences for students and community members.

"We appreciate the support of the board and this community," RED program director Pamela Elmi said during the Board of Education's Tuesday night meeting.

The Board of Education unanimously approved Ms. Elmi, of Hamilton Square, as program director for RED in March 2011. She serves as a non-affiliate employee of the school district and directs the completely self-funded entrepreneurial venture.

During Tuesday night's meeting, Ms. Elmi said in 2011 she presented the board with a timeline of success and at that time noted it takes three years for any new community program to take root and establish a sustaining power.

"Back then you took a chance on me and a new venture for the district," she said.

Today, she said RED is proud to be able to fund the creation of a new playground at Sharon Elementary School with money raised through the tuition costs of the program.

"I know you feel good about that but it's more than dollars and cents," she said.

She said RED has established a family microcosm in Robbinsville schools, noting that RED staff members are on a first name basis with parents, love their jobs and aren't just working for a paycheck.

"We want students to grow up successfully," she said.

She said when most people have off for the holidays, RED staff members are working 10-hour days from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and that they work through spring break. She said their average work day starts when most people's alarm clocks are just going off.

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See DISTRICT, Page 2A

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Noting that pictures speak louder than words, she showed the board a slideshow of kids in the RED program working on arts and crafts, singing, dressing up for Halloween, making seasonal decorations and doing homework with the help of staff members.

Superintendent of Schools Steven Mayer said, "We've really seen solid growth and it's consistently been a solid win for the kids after school."

He also commended RED staff for helping take the "homework fight" away from parents.

Board member Vincent Constanza said his daughter has been in the RED program for three years and he thinks it's wonderful for children. He also commended the RED staff for keeping the program warm and welcoming despite all of the new security regulations schools have to deal with in the modern age.

For more information about RED, contact Ms. Elmi at Elmi@robbinsville.k12.nj.us or 609-632-0910 ext. 2215.

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