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## Center pleased with new space

### Southbridge program serving 800 children

## By Brian Lee TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

**SOUTHBRIDGE**— An early intervention program is celebrating its new home, which will enable it to stay in a location near the people it serves.

The Kennedy-Donovan Center South Central Early Intervention Program, at 486 Worcester St., Route 169, held an open house yesterday at its new 5,000-square-foot building which opened in July.

The program has been in Southbridge since the early 1990s. Previously, it was in Charlton.

President-CEO Kevin R. Conare said, "We stayed in Southbridge because it's really well-located for all the families we serve."

The program serves nearly 800 children a year up to age 3 with developmental delays, which represents one of 10 children in Southbridge, Charlton, Sturbridge, Webster, Dudley, Oxford, Spencer, Brimfield, Wales, Holland, Warren and the Brookfields, according to program literature.

Its \$4,000 monthly mortgage is comparable to what it paid in rent when it was on Main Street, and the new building allows room for growth, Mr. Conare said. It can now expand to serving children up to 5.

"There's been a lot of things happening with programs. We started a new preschool program. We were just approached by the state of Connecticut to do early intervention services for their underserved corridor" that includes the Woodstock and Killingly areas, said Ann E. Buono, vice president of development-public relations.

The new facility has staff, play group and preschool space, of which at least 80 percent is devoted to children, she said. It also has a parent room for meetings.

"We had it specially built ... we wanted the child-sized bathrooms, sinks in the room. We needed more space and a playground," said Lauren F. Boisvert, who coordinates two programs.

CVS Caremark Charitable Trust donated \$15,000 for the playground, which has a rubberized surface, important for preventing injuries because the program serves children with mobility problems, Ms. Buono said.

"It's very expensive. Without the grant, we never could have afforded to do that."

The project was built by Dan Flynn Construction Co., with interior work by Dan Matte. The architect was Trifone Design Associates.



The Kennedy-Donovan Center South Central Early Intervention Program is celebrating its new home. Pictured yesterday At the facility yesterday, from left are: teacher Bethany Iwanski reads to students including Benjamin Moquin, Austin Quinney, Cameron Courtney and Sierra Cromack. (BRIAN LEE)

The program paid \$570,000 for the land and construction. It was purchased from Mr. Matte and Mr. Flynn.

Kennedy-Donovan also has offices in Attleboro and South Yarmouth, two separate programs in both its Milford and Plymouth offices, and four programs in its New Bedford office.

Ms. Buono said the program wants to acquire facilities where it makes sense. "We can't afford to buy in Cape Cod, but we can afford to buy in Southbridge. It's really been a great opportunity for us."

State Sen. Richard T. Moore, D-Uxbridge, and state Rep. Geraldo Alicea, D-Charlton, attended the open house.

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