

Children's Lighthouse Preschool Opens in South Riding

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Jagadeesh Putchala, owner of Children's Lighthouse of Chantilly, gives a tour of the facility.

A new preschool and “early learning center” in South Riding opened Jan. 29 for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years old.

Located on Defender Drive, the school is part of the Children's Lighthouse franchise and owned by South Riding resident Jagadeesh Putchala. He emphasized that the school is “not just a typical day care — this is a learning center.”

Opening a preschool has been a goal for Putchala and his wife, Shumona Ahmed, since their children, now 8 and 14 years old, were in day care.

“I saw them go to their own day cares, and I saw how things were done and some things that I didn’t quite like in the different kinds of education that they were getting — or not getting — sometimes,” Putchala said. “And that kind of added to the passion that me and my wife had to start digging.”



They looked into different franchises in search of a preschool that would have a home-like atmosphere and modern, research-based curriculum. Putchala ultimately settled on Children’s Lighthouse, a Texas-based franchise with schools across nine states. The first school opened in 1997.

“The curriculum in this franchise is very well thought out. And more importantly, it’s current,” Putchala said. “It’s based on current research out there, and they’re not stuck on one methodology. So they evolve based on what the latest research tells them.” The curriculum also doesn’t include a lot of technology, which Putchala said was a plus, and there’s “constant, daily engagement” with parents.

Children's Lighthouse of Chantilly, located at 43385 Defender Drive, is separated into three different programs, called Lighthouse Pathways: Lighthouse Bright for ages 6 weeks to 24 months, Lighthouse Cares for ages 2 to 5 years old and xSTREAM Quest for students kindergarten-age to 12 years old. They also offer a summer program for ages 2 through 12 years old.



Kristen Mulrone and Jagadeesh Putchala

The classrooms have different stations and activities that rotate out every month and change based on the age range of children in each classroom. They have everything from sand and water toys to costumes for students to role play with.

In xSTREAM Quest, students complete “quests” in science, technology, reading, engineering, art and math. Students earn badges when they complete quests, similar to Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts programs, Putchala said.

“There’s a set lesson plan, but if a child is ahead, we’re not going to stop them. We’re going to let them keep going and continue to grow,” said Kristen Mulrone, the director of Children’s Lighthouse of Chantilly. “And if a child is not yet ready for what’s in the

