

DELAWARE STARS PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT:



The Children's Secret Garden

A Center Dedicated to Providing Quality Child Care to All Children

December 2018



It's no secret that this Star Level 5 program is committed to quality. "Secret Garden is a beacon on the hill. This program has taken risks and embraced challenges to provide quality child care with their eye always on the benefit to the child," said Nancy Edwards, Stars Curriculum and Assessment Technical Assistant.

Although providing quality child care is this program's unifying goal, their challenges are unique to the children they serve. The Children's Secret Garden, located in Dover, Del., is a Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care program – seventy five percent of their children have medical needs that require skilled nursing.

At this program, both educators and nurses work side by side teaching and tending to the wide-ranging needs of the children in their care. Nurses are trained in child development and attend Stars trainings such as Foundations of Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold. Additionally, the educators on staff serve as a resource by providing feedback about ways to improve teaching practices.

"Nurses care for the whole child," said Marian Favors, child care director. "Our staff reflects a marriage of both education and health care."

"Everyone here is deeply committed to making inclusion their top priority. Teachers and nurses work tirelessly to minimize the struggles of the children," said Stacy Smith, who teams with Marian as a center administrator.

And for the children that are developmentally typical, "they don't bat an eye." During a typical morning at Secret Garden, a little boy in a wheelchair shares a book with a little girl sitting on the carpet while a child with diabetes gets pulled to the side during circle time for a blood check.

"The staff works to help the children find similarities between them versus differences," Smith said.

Every child enrolled – from the infants to the four- and five-year olds- is getting the same quality care and education.

"I wish we could get to a Star Level 7," Favors adds. "Stars has shown us what quality is and we keep wanting to go higher and higher."