

New child development home opens on Arsenal Island

Rita Pearson, rpearson@qconline.com

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Baskets of warm cookies and pitchers of milk greeted visitors to the new Covenant Cottage on Arsenal Island Wednesday.

The Arsenal's first child development home is the latest option in childcare services for active duty military, Department of Defense civilians and contractors employed on Arsenal Island.

Covenant Cottage will provide the benefits of a child development center and the comfort of a family child care home for children ages 4 weeks to 12 years.

Advance reservations are required, with first preference for Saturday care given to active duty military. Covenant Cottage can be used for hourly care, back-up emergencies, respite, temporary full-time, evenings, Saturday mornings and special events.

Nancy Reeves, coordinator for Child, Youth and School Services; John Lensing, director of Family Morale Welfare and Recreation, and Nancy Lawson, family childcare director, cut a ceremonial red ribbon at 11 a.m. Wednesday as friends, family, parents and children cheered.

An open house for the cottage will continue from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today through Friday.

Obtaining approvals and converting the former military housing into a child development home was a four-year endeavor. Ms. Lawson, the Arsenal's family childcare director, credited Ms. Reeves for not taking "no" for an answer when she saw the need for such emergency care to help active duty military families.

The cottage provides immediate childcare for active duty military families when no other childcare services are available.

"If a military family arrived tonight, we'd be able to help them with their immediate childcare," Ms. Reeves said. "Other (Arsenal) facilities are full now" until the new child development center opens next spring.



[More photos from this shoot](#)

Photo: Gary Krambeck

Nancy Lawson, Family Child Care director, left, John Lensing, Director of Family Morale Welfare and Recreation and Nancy Reeves, Coordinator Child Youth and School Services cut the ribbon marking the opening of the Covenant Cottage at the Rock Island Arsenal Wednesday afternoon. It is the Rock Island Arsenal's first child development home and is designed for back up emergencies for military families with children 4 weeks old to 12 years of age.

Arsenal officials broke ground for a new child development center Oct. 16. The foundation and walls of the modular building have been erected. The center is scheduled to open in the summer of 2009.

Covenant Cottage has space for 12 children at a time. All rooms of the former military housing, now designated Building 85, have been converted into activity rooms, Ms. Reeves said. Portable cribs and cots can be brought out for nap time. The home has been outfitted with new toys, games, a computer and furniture.

Frank Whipple of Bettendorf supervised his sons' play and cookie intake during the open house. His sons, Frankie, 3, and Jacob, 2, could use the center if there were a need for a babysitter in an emergency. He and his wife already use the existing childcare center for Frankie two days a week, but there is no room for Jacob until the new center opens.

Shane McDonough of Rock Island also brought his daughter, Chloe, 13-months, to enjoy the open house and support the organization. "It's obvious this will be a real service for both military and civilian families," he said.

Funds for Covenant Cottage came from the Army Family Covenant, which provides 16 hours of free respite care per month for children of deployed soldiers. The covenant shows the soldiers and their families that the Army recognizes their sacrifices and strength and is committed to providing a quality of life commensurate with their service.

Rock Island Arsenal's child development center programs are certified by the Department of Defense and accredited by the National Association for Education of Young Children.