



Press Release

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Eco-Friendly Child Care Center Opens in Fremont

With floors covered with recycled tiles, furniture rehabilitated from Seattle consignment and salvage stores, and even toys composed of all-natural materials, the newly opened **Our Beginning Child Care & Early Learning Center** in Fremont is one of the most eco-friendly child-care centers in the country.

Stepping inside the 10,000-square-foot space will immediately change any preconceptions of a child-care center. Beyond the recycled shelving and furnishings of the classrooms and play areas, visitors see Maya, the center's cook, making organic meals in a state-of-the-art kitchen--on a stove purchased from the South Seattle salvage company Second Use. When she serves the children delicious, nutritious meals of wild salmon, carrot muffins, and fresh-steamed broccoli, their parents never have to worry about harmful pesticides or chemicals in the food.

Maya's kitchen is a first in Washington State, the only child-care center to be certified USDA Organic. "That means that no food can enter **Our Beginning's** kitchen unless it's marked with that oh-so-important 'o' word," notes **Our Beginning** owner and director Paula Jones.

Children's learning ability and performance are directly related to the healthiness of their diet, says Jones, a former Head Start director who founded **Our Beginning** based on her personal earth-first philosophy. "What better way to teach children about the environment that to create an environment that represents the best in local sustainability while simultaneously serving children healthy organic food?" Jones asks. "After all, we are what we eat!"

Our Beginning, which opened Jan. 4, has been designated "eco-healthy" by the Oregon Environmental Council's Eco-Healthy Child Care Program, meaning it meets at least 25 eco-healthy standards in areas such as wall and ceiling paint, floor and furniture finishes, rugs, toys, and food preparation, among others. The center is licensed by the Washington State Department of Early Learning to serve 129 children.

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