

# Construction on “My First Funtime” is underway

By Taylor McKay Hathorn

On August 1, 2000, Walter Daniel and Lesia Daniel Hollingshead made a risky gamble: they both quit their jobs to reinvent Funtime, the Clinton-based skating rink business that had first belonged to their grandparents and then to their parents.

“That was a big leap of faith,” Daniel admitted. He and his sister agreed, however, that they felt the time was right to make a career change, as there was a need for childcare services in the Clinton area. They believed that Funtime was the perfect candidate to play host to a pre-school and an after-school program, given the business’s name recognition.

“Everyone grew up skating in Clinton,” Daniel reflected. “Everyone knew the name Funtime.”

Hollingshead says that the name recognition has only expanded in the two decades since

she and her brother went into business together, remarking, “When the health department approved the skating rink to be used Monday through Friday as a childcare program, we were the first in Mississippi. Now, there are skating rinks and gyms that have this all over the state, and they copied our business model [to do it].”

Their business model will once again serve as an exemplar for the area, as the duo recently leased the facility formerly known as “Creative Kids,” intending to transform the space into “My First Funtime,” a childcare center for infants and young toddlers, a group that Daniel and Hollingshead believe are presently underserved by existing daycare centers.

“We have quite a few families enrolled in our programs who are expecting babies,” Hollingshead noted, citing the COVID-19 “baby boom” for the noticeable uptick in the need for

childcare services. “We don’t have a spot until June 2022, so we knew we needed to expand.”

Creative Kids’ decision to close its doors coincided with the siblings’ decision to enlarge their business, and they have wasted no time in getting the



structure ready.

“[Getting it up to standard] is vitally important to children and families,” Daniel stated. “Safety and security are number-one for us.”

This commitment to safety never wavered during the pandemic, though Daniel and Hollingshead admitted that their businesses struggled and often relied on PPP loans to remain

a float during the shut-down.

“Our size really got us through it,” Daniel said. “We were big enough to get through when a lot of smaller places were not, so when you’re making it month to month and your enrollment is decreased by two-thirds or more, you can’t sustain that for any long period of time.”

The large class sizes that buoyed Funtime throughout the pandemic have again risen to their normal numbers, with one hundred ninety students attending the daily pre-school and roughly two hundred students attending the after-school program. Once the renovations to “My First Funtime” are completed in October, there will be room for around seventy babies, which Hollingshead estimates will bring their number of staff to well over one hundred.

“We’re working around the clock,” Hollingshead. “We’re excited to get this done and provide this service for people.”

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