



## Blue Elephants, Like Children, are Unique

**FIVE YEARS AGO**, a Frisco couple – he a firefighter, she a second-grade teacher – had their first child, a precious daughter named Gracie. While mastering the parenting skills of midnight feedings and minutemen-style diaper changes, they also reveled in the hugs and affection that children can bring.

In raising a family, they also uncovered a passion: to provide caring services for other families' children, with the same affection and attention they gave their own. The couple daydreamed about having an animal theme throughout...with rooms like circus, ocean, precious planet, beach, jungle, zoo and barnyard--a safe, fun and educational place with a unique name, a reminder that every child is unique.

Three years later, their son Tyler provided more love in the family. By the time he was two, the couple – Clay and Meredith Carpenter – realized their dream and opened The Blue Elephant Learning Center.

"The Blue Elephant Learning Center was a natural progression for us," notes Meredith. "I had been providing in-home care since Gracie was a young toddler and the need for our service was so great that

it was obvious the next step was finding a bigger place."

The Blue Elephant Learning Center provides care from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. for children from six weeks old, all the way to after-schoolers 12 years of age. Their loving, well-trained teachers provide encouragement, praise and hugs as well as teaching school readiness skills through the day. Enabling each child to have a safe, fun and educational day is their priority.

### ALL IN THE FAMILY

For Director Meredith Carpenter, her background as a second grade teacher and an in-home care provider confirms that she is in the right place. Playing to her natural strengths, she oversees the education as well as hires and motivates the Center's teachers. Ultimately, it is her job to meet her own challenge: ensuring that every day is each child's best day at The Blue Elephant Learning Center.

Clay Carpenter uses his talents in finance, handling the business aspects of the Center, during down time from the fire station. "We have a running joke that we can NEVER cross over into the other's area," notes Meredith. The kidding under-

lies the regard they have for each other and the recognition that each person, no matter their age, has uniqueness waiting to be fostered.

Parents who are searching for quality care will want to know that The Blue Elephant Learning Center is family-owned, not franchised. Owning The Blue Elephant means that the Carpenters can keep their services focused on what the region's parents are looking for. "We wanted our personal stamp on the business," says Meredith. "We wanted quality in everything and we knew that a franchise might lock us in to what headquarters felt was quality, but that we knew was less than what we ourselves could offer."

### WHAT A CAMPUS!

Part of the Carpenters' dream was to have an amazing, spacious facility. They got that in spades. Located near the intersection of Eldorado and Legacy, The Blue Elephant Learning Center has an incredible 10,000 square feet. There are ten classrooms, allowing for the best groupings of each age.

The Blue Elephant campus features THREE playgrounds. A smaller-scaled playground for infants lies in complete

shade, preschoolers and after-schoolers each have a playground, much of which is shaded with UV protective screens. The Carpenters even selected an outdoor ground covering which looks and feels like real grass. "We wanted to make sure there were no wood chips or recycled tire bits for these precious ones to put in their mouths," observes Meredith. "And we do all of this because I think recess and free play are such important parts of a child's BEST day."

#### LOVING, WELL-TRAINED TEACHERS:

"As a former teacher, I use my teaching experience to know just how to appreciate my teachers here. I firmly believe that, by appreciating The Blue Elephant teachers, they will then turn around and give true nurturing care that is this Center's hallmark," affirms Meredith.

An example of this is, once a month Meredith caters a special lunch for her teachers. "I provide layers of appreciation because I want them to find it enjoyable to actually be at work some days at 6:30 in the morning. I want to have everything they might need to refresh themselves throughout the day."

As director of this family-owned business, Meredith enjoys hand-selecting the Center's teachers. "I ask myself 'Who would I trust with my own kids?' when I interview prospective teachers for The Blue Elephant," Meredith emphasizes. "Sure, I'm looking for credentials, but I'm also looking for nurturing personalities, someone who truly loves kids."

To make sure there is enough encouragement, praise and hugs, Meredith staffs The Blue Elephant with four floating teachers and three office staff whose specific responsibilities each morning are to comfort children who start off each day missing their moms and dads. "At The Blue Elephant, I insist that someone always be available to comfort a crying child."

#### EDUCATOR-CREATED CURRICULUM.

Meredith selected an educator-created curriculum for The Blue Elephant: Fun Shine Express. The curriculum develops the children's educational skills that best meet the Texas Education Standards for School Readiness. "This curriculum helps us develop the individual needs, skills, and talents of each child, which is part of our overall mission."



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#### EVEN THE FOOD IS FANTASTIC.

"I wanted quality right down to the food we offer at The Blue Elephant Learning Center," states Meredith. The food at the Center is catered by U.S. Foods, which specializes in higher quality and fresh ingredients. "This is not cafeteria fare; it's food like lasagna and club sandwiches...you know, food that parents would not mind eating," she laughs.

#### ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS.

•Meredith invites parents who are considering educational learning centers to come in for a tour and to talk to her personally.

•The ratios of teachers to students are

lower than allotted by the State of Texas. For instance, our 2s classroom will not exceed our ratio of 2 teachers to 16 students, whereas the state allows 22 students to be present with 2 teachers.

•The classrooms are oversized for the number of students

•The Blue Elephant intentionally "underfills" rooms so children have room to play

•Surveillance cameras are in every class,

each playground and all hallways. Parents are welcome to log on with a password and watch as long as he or she would like.

•And yet with all these amenities, the rates for families of The Blue Elephant Learning Center are comparable to other learning centers in this area of North Texas.

#### SPECIAL SERVICES.

The last Friday of every month, parents can enjoy a parents' night out. Kids get an educational program, art, pizza, popcorn, pajamas and a movie. For the kids, every Friday during the day is Fun Fitness Friday, with a physical education expert teaching on health and leading

in playful exercise. A professional photographer comes in seasonally to catch children when they are happy and snap away, taking memorable pictures that parents can purchase online.

Every quarter, The Blue Elephant hosts weekend family entertainment such as bounce house bashes and spring socials, so that families can come together without moms having to plan anything. And, of course, every summer at The Blue Elephant Learning Center starts with a pre-K graduation ceremony and is then packed with tons of summertime boot camps, field days and other activities.

Consider The Blue Elephant Learning Center, as your child's BEST days lie ahead! Call Director Meredith Carpenter for tours and a consultation.