

# The Bowie Star

A PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GAZETTE NEWSPAPER

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*What's so funny?*



BRENDA AHEARN/THE STAR

am, the laughing yoga instructor, leads a class at the Bowie Senior Center on March 28 in Bowie. Phillips of Bowie (center left to right), Kathleen Lacey of Bowie and Harjit Sehgal of Mitchellville.

## Laughing yoga class is no joke

funny? Nothing. They were practicing laughing yoga, a relatively new twist on ancient Indian yoga practices, which uses a routine of playful exercises to stimulate stress-busting snickers.

"It is childlike playfulness," explained Mason. "It may look silly but it's playful and how often do we get a chance to be playful?"

Madan Kataria, a doctor from Mumbai, India, first incorporated laughter into yoga practice in a laughter club in 1995 while studying the health

benefits of laughter. Since then, more than 5,000 laughter clubs have formed in more than 50 countries.

Sessions start with a good stretch and some deep breathing but quickly spiral into contagious giggle fits. Mason said laughs at first are often fake and forced.

"We fake it until we make it," she said.

But as students watch the expressions on each others' faces they soon begin to laugh for real.

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# YMCA expands day care services

■ Grant funding enables program in Bowie for children with chronic medical conditions

BY MEGAN KING  
STAFF WRITER

Children with chronic medical conditions soon will have a day care center available to them in Bowie as a result of grant funding from the state and a partnership between the Arc of Prince George's County and the YMCA.

The YMCA-Arc Partnership, funded through a \$229,000 grant from the Maryland State Department of Education, will set up a program for children with chronic medical conditions, who require close medical supervision, to have a

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## COUNTY SHOWDOWN

*Bowie High baseball team seeks first win against Roosevelt since 2005.*

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## YMCA

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day care program that involves them with other children.

Currently, the YMCA offers day care for preschool and school-age children, and as a result of the grant, will re-open its infant and toddler program to both children with medical needs and other children.

Many families of children with medical needs do not have a day care center they can use and are unable to work, said Andrea Kolp, associate executive director of program services for the Arc of Prince George's County. Arc is a national organization which provides services to people with mental retardation and their families.

"Typical child care centers just can't manage that level of care," Kolp said. "So the child might be perfectly healthy and need pre [school] education so they're ready for school and ready to learn, and [parents] can't find a center that's willing to accept them because of their increased needs."

There are only two such programs in the state, Kolp said, with one located in Montgomery County and a second in Baltimore.

As part of the program, the YMCA in Bowie will also re-open day care for infants and toddlers for all children, which it has not offered for the last two years, according to Jessica Bennett, associate executive director of the YMCA of Prince George's County Program Center.

The program will accept 44 children ages 6 weeks to 5-years-old. The grant was awarded for two years and is renewable after it expires.

Bennett said the program will not be significantly different for the children who currently attend day care at the YMCA, as they already have children with disabilities included in their programs.

The children in the program will use the Creative Classroom

## IF YOU GO

■ **What:** The YMCA-Arc Partnership Open House

■ **Where:** YMCA Prince George's County Program Center, 3501 Moylan Drive, Bowie

■ **When:** 9 a.m. Wednesday

■ **Contact:** 301-262-4342

curriculum, developed by the publishing company Teaching Strategies, which encourages them to learn through exploring and discovery with child-directed activities such as playing with blocks, reading, art and games.

"It's more of a child-driven program as opposed to a teacher-driven program," Bennett said.

Each child in the program with medical needs will have a medical assessment completed daily, said Judy Tribby, the Arc's nursing administrator.

The fees for the program will be \$990 per month for infants, \$800 per month for 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds and \$750 per month for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds. Three-year-olds must be toilet-trained to move up into the 3-year-old and 4-year-old class.

Bennett said the YMCA's goal is to have the program running by May 1, depending on how quickly they can hire the additional day care teachers who will be needed to staff the program.

Bennett said the center is looking to hire at least four new teachers to staff the program.

Kolp said the inclusive nature of the program will be beneficial to typical children as well as children with disabilities.

"We just think it benefits humanity to have kids of all different ability levels live and breathe and go to school together. It's one of our founding beliefs."

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