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JAMAICA PLAIN, LEXINGTON

Lexington family renovates JP kids space in memory of grandmother

Posted by Matt Rocheleau May 9, 2011 09:00 AM

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(Courtesy: Bright Horizons)

A ribbon-cutting for the new Oonah Clarke Bright Space at MSPCC Friday.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

As a way to honor and memorialize the memory of their grandmother, a six-member Lexington family renovated a relaxation space for kids at the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's Kids Day program in Jamaica Plain.

Named after Liz O'Neil's mother, who taught preschool for more than 20 years, the Oonah Clarke Bright Space at MSPCC officially opened Friday with a ribbon cutting at the start of Mother's Day weekend.

Liz, her husband Gary and their four children were inspired to renovate the space through a program called "Bright Spaces," which renovates facilities serving children and families in need.

Gary O'Neil is an executive at Bright Horizons, a Watertown-based international child care and early education company that runs the space-

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renovating program through its children's foundation. In the fall, he **biked 165 miles** -- from Westhampton Beach, N.Y., where Oonah lived, to Boston -- to help raise money to renovate the JP kids space.

"When the family heard about the Kid's Day program at MSPCC and saw the need they had for a new space for the children, they knew it was the perfect place for a Bright Space in Oonah Clarke's memory," said an announcement. "The family raised money for all the supplies necessary for the renovation and spent time renovating the space themselves."

The new space is designed for relaxation -- unofficially called a "Cool Out Room."

"The O'Neil family wanted the children who participate in the program to feel a part of the transformation and created a handprint mural on the walls and invited the children to participate," the release added.

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(Courtesy: Bright Horizons)

The O'Neil Family poses in the MSPCC room they renovated.

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