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TULSA MUSEUMS -
TOP REASONS TO STAY
CLOSE TO HOME THIS SUMM

NURTURING A
VOLUNTEER SPIRIT:
TEEN VOLUNTEERING
OPPORTUNITIES

FAVORITE PICNIC SPOT
RECIPES TO TAKE

PARENTING
MEDIA ASSOCIATION
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BY LERIN MADOLE

Miss Helen's School celebrates 60 years

To a 6-year-old, 60 years seems like an eternity to fathom. So the children of Miss Helen's Private School in Tulsa are all buzzing with excitement in celebration of its 60-year anniversary.

In answer to the question of how the school has lasted 60 years, Executive Director Lynda Wingo says, "When we enroll a child, we enroll the family."

Wingo's mother-in-law, who founded Miss Helen's, wanted the family-owned school to also be family-focused, giving students a sense of belonging to the Miss Helen's family long after they graduated.

From its inception, Miss Helen's had high-quality education at its core. Wingo is proud of the "diverse body of families" that make up the school's enrollment.

"They're families that are interested in education," she said, "not just daycare."

Miss Helen was a kindergarten teacher in Tulsa Public Schools at a time when most women were homemakers.

"She had quite a vision and was a pioneer as a woman in the fifties starting a business," Wingo pointed out. She recognized the need for children to have a transition between the routines of home life and the structure of a classroom.

She recruited three friends to work with her as she developed a unique program. It was designed for young attention spans and as



LYNDA WINGO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISS HELEN'S, STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AS THEY PLAN A TIME CAPSULE ON THE SCHOOL GROUNDS.

an introduction to the classroom, giving children the opportunity to experience different teachers.

"Miss Helen's goal was to create a comfortable feel for the kids that felt like a home away from home," Wingo said.

Increased demand from parents for more offerings in the school created opportunity for further growth.

"We've added Spanish in with our music classes as well as some technology and handwriting," Wingo said. She added that current technology and games offer so many more teaching tools than were available 60 years ago, making the additional material easier and easier to incorporate into the program.

Today, Miss Helen's Private

School offers classes for children through the fifth grade. Wingo said that teachers challenge the children to their highest potential, finding their strengths and weaknesses, and really working to prepare them for sixth grade.

When asked about the future of the school, Wingo said, "With my own daughter and granddaughter now working in the school, I would love to see the school continue on as a family-focused school. The family unit has changed over the years, but we still want to maintain a family feeling for the child. They're with us so many waking hours, I don't want that to ever change. I want every child that comes through to leave with a loving feeling, a sense of accomplishment, and the

knowledge that they were part of something really special."

So with the past, present and future of the school in mind, Miss Helen's is pulling out all the stops for a truly celebratory year. A father-daughter dance, called the 'Mustache Bash,' took place in March with a mother-son 'Rockin' Rollin' Skate Night' hot on its heels. The students accumulated large quantities of Play-dough that they then combined into one huge 60-pound ball in observance of the 60th class day in the school's 60th year. It just so happens that Hasbro, the makers of the beloved Play-dough are also celebrating their 60th anniversary this year. Miss Helen's staff hopes to make a connection with them to share in each other's successes.

Students are also writing poems and collecting treasures to be included in a time capsule to be buried on the school property. A flashmob dance is scheduled to take place, complete with festive t-shirts for the occasion. August will bring an Open House full of activities for adults and children alike. Then, in September, a grand appreciation event is planned at the Hardrock Casino for alumni, teachers, staff, counselors, legislators and any others that have taken part in the school's growth over the years. Later that month will be a country style family event at the Tulsa Events Center with 'Boots 'n' Bling' as a theme.