

IN BRIEF

Cvent opens headquarters in Tysons near Silver Line

Event management software firm Cvent has opened its Tysons Corner headquarters. Cvent has moved to the building next to the new Greensboro Station on Metro's Silver Line to accommodate an anticipated increase in the size of the company over the next three years. The company has about 450 employees in Tysons and expects to add about 400.

Cvent founder and chief executive Reggie Aggarwal said the construction of the Silver Line was a major factor in the company's decision on where to locate the headquarters because it will help lure potential employees.

"We are very grateful for all the infrastructure that has been put in here," he said. "Thanks to everyone here for creating the right environment to grow."

County's second collection of blankets for Syrian refugees

Fairfax County is again collecting blankets for refugees who have fled to Turkey from Syria and other countries to escape violence. Last year, Fairfax County and other member jurisdictions of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission collected and shipped more than 18,000 blankets.

"Last year's collection drive was incredible, with literally thousands of blankets being dropped off at Fairfax County locations," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova (D). "I know our community will be there once again to help our neighbors."

This year's drive will take place from Nov. 1 to Nov. 22. Details and locations are at www.helpsyrianrefugees.net.

County high school graduation rate about 93 percent

Nearly 93 percent of Fairfax County students graduated on time this spring, according to data from the Virginia Department of Education.

Of Fairfax County students who started high school in the 2010-2011 school year, 92.9 percent graduated in four years. The graduation rate for the county cohort beats the state rate, 89.9 percent, by three percentage points.

The graduation rate for the class of 2014 increased by 0.9 percent over the class of 2013. Of the students who graduated this spring, 62 percent earned an advanced studies diploma.

Tobacco-free signs to be installed on playgrounds

The Fairfax County School Board recently approved installation of signs declaring school playgrounds and fields tobacco-free zones.

Placing signs on the fields and playgrounds expands a 1994 smoking prohibition policy to those open-air spaces.

A vision for education fulfilled

Carole Nysmith talks about the school she started 30 years ago that has grown and is thriving

BY KATE YANCHULIS
Fairfax County Times

Carole Nysmith sat in her office on the 13-acre campus of Nysmith School for the Gifted in Herndon and thought about the school's humbler beginnings.

The private school opened in 1984 in the original Reston Visitor Center, "a perfectly round little building" just big enough for the original 55 students, she said.

"It leaked like a sieve," Nysmith recalled. "But it was great."

"We had the map of Reston still on the wall from when it was the visitor center," said her son Ken Nysmith.

Ken Nysmith, 52, is headmaster of the school, which — after several moves — ended up in its current home in 2000, where it serves more than 600 children.

Carole Nysmith, 78, who founded the school, holds no formal role although she still keeps an office there and frequently gives tours, visits classrooms or walks the halls checking on students.

Before founding the school, she was a teacher at Sunrise Valley Elementary in Reston, where she enjoyed teaching students in the Fairfax County school system's advanced academic program. But she wanted to offer advanced academics to students in kindergarten, first and second grades who were not served by the county's advanced programs, which started in third grade.

She scraped together money from her and her husband's savings and borrowed money from her two sons to start the school.

"I think back sometimes, and it kind of surprises me that I had the nerve," Nysmith said.

To recruit students, she would put ads in local newspapers and hold talks at the Reston Community Center.

"Back in those days, Reston wasn't that old, or that big," Nysmith said. "So if I hadn't taught you, I had probably taught your neighbor. Name recognition. I don't know that you could do it these days, but in those days, you'd get people saying, 'Oh yes, go listen to Carole.'"

Nysmith School opened with six teachers in kindergarten, first and second grades.

"Then as they got older I planned on putting all the children back into Fairfax County's gifted program," Nysmith said. "But they wouldn't go."

Parents expressed a desire to keep their children at the school past second grade. By the late 1980s, Nysmith conceded, adding grades three through six.



TIN NGUYEN / FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

Ken Nysmith, headmaster of the Nysmith School for the Gifted, and his mother, Carole, who founded it in 1984. The facility has grown from 55 students in kindergarten, first and second grade to more than 600 students through eighth grade.

"And then some parents came in one day and said, 'We really ought to tell you, Carole, we refuse to leave.' I laughed, because I thought they were kidding," she said. "They weren't."

"I think back sometimes, and it kind of surprises me that I had the nerve."

Carole Nysmith, on her decision to open the private school in 1984

So Nysmith expanded again, adding grades seven and eight in 1989. Today the school serves students from preschool through eighth grade — about 70 children at each grade level. Tuition ranges from \$21,000 for full-day preschool to \$30,850 for students in grades four through eight.

As the school has grown, so has its curriculum. It places a particular focus on science and technology, providing 45

minutes of science instruction each day for all students and offering state-of-the-art computer labs.

Nysmith said the school's core mission has remained the same: providing individualized education for all students. Ken Nysmith said he thinks that helps set the school apart.

"We have a maximum of two teachers and 18 students in each classroom," he said. "That's how we're really able to differentiate the instruction and connect with each child."

Carole Nysmith is pleased when she sees her son greet every student in the halls by name, glad her vision for education has become a family affair.

"When I asked him to help at first, he said, 'I'm not working for my mother,'" she said.

"And here we are 30 years later," Ken said.

kyanchulis@fairfaxtimes.com

These articles are from Fairfax County Times, a community newspaper published Fridays by The Washington Post. Phone: 703-437-5400.