



This is a preliminary rendering of the Children's Paradise childcare center in Ramona, which is subject to change. Courtesy Children's Paradise and Woodcrest Homes, Inc.

Groundbreaking ceremony held for future Children's Paradise center

Ramona facility expected to serve up to 230 children after it opens in mid-2027

By Julie Gallant

A vacant Ramona retail space in a prime Main Street location is being demolished to make way for a 12,400-square-foot Children's Paradise learning center.

A March 27 groundbreaking for the \$10.4 million project at 1721 Main St. was attended by community members and partners, including the San Diego County Office of Education, the California Department

of Social Services, and First 5 San Diego.

The building is designed with the nostalgic facade of an old-fashioned Ramona schoolhouse complete with a school bell, said Julie Lowen, CEO and owner of Children's Paradise. It is expected to open for up to 230 children in mid-2027.

"We are passionate about meeting the needs of working families," Lowen said. "This new center in Ramona represents our commitment to meeting families where they are and ensuring children have the strong start they need to succeed in school and in life."

Children's Paradise currently

operates eight early childhood education centers that serve 1,500 children in Poway, Oceanside, Carlsbad, three locations in Vista, two locations in Escondido with a third Escondido location opening soon. The Ramona Children's Paradise will be its 10th facility.

The newest Children's Paradise will be built by Ramona-based Woodcrest Homes, Inc.

Woodcrest Homes President Steve Powell said the 1977 building to be demolished was at various times occupied by dental providers, insurance agents, hair salons and at least one record store and sports memorabilia retailer.

Woodcrest will serve as the general contractor for the project in partnership with Children's Paradise, he said. The project has been in the planning stages with Lowen for about a year and a half, he said.

"I can't tell you how excited and proud I am to have everyone here," Powell said during the groundbreaking ceremony. "This has been a long time coming. What it will do for Ramona is something we haven't seen before."

Lowen announced at the event that the child care site will be known as the Powell Building.

"It's a legacy for someone who has consistently and relentlessly

fought for Ramona," she said.

Powell was also instrumental in demolishing the former "crackhouse," a vacant graffiti-covered building next to the future Children's Paradise.

Established in 1990, Children's Paradise provides early care and education and support services to children and their families. The company serves infants, toddlers, preschoolers and transitional preschoolers from age birth to 5 years old. For school-age kids ages 5 to 8 years old, the centers offer before-and-after-school care and

PARADISE

From Page 1

summer camp programs.

The Ramona site will offer comprehensive services to children ages birth to 12 years old, Lowen said.

Company officials say among children enrolled in Children's Paradise programs, 94 percent receive subsidies based on family income and more than 100 have special needs.

In Ramona, Lowen said families of four who earn up to \$127,000 per year are eligible for free tuition at Children's Paradise.

And beyond early education, Children's Paradise provides comprehensive support to families, including food distributions, clothing closets, referrals to social services and transportation between school and care, she said.

Alethea Arguilez, executive director of First 5 San Diego, said she commends Children's Paradise for

investing in the community and helping ensure young children enter school ready to learn while supporting working families in San Diego County.

"Access to high-quality early care and education is foundational to a child's development and a family's ability to thrive," Arguilez said. "In rural communities like Ramona, where options are limited, expanding access is not just important, it's essential."

Shaina Cormier, a Vista resident who has worked at Children's Paradise over four years, said her three children attend Children's Paradise while she works in Vista overseeing multiple sites as a mentor director. Cormier said the company provides high-quality education no matter what the family's socioeconomic status.

"My children love it," she said during the groundbreaking ceremony. "It's their second home. They're so excited to go there."



The vacant office professional building at 1721 Main St. will become the 10th Children's Paradise location in San Diego County once it is completed next May. **PHOTOS BY JULIE GALLANT**



Built in 1977, the Powell Building formerly housed office professional tenants.



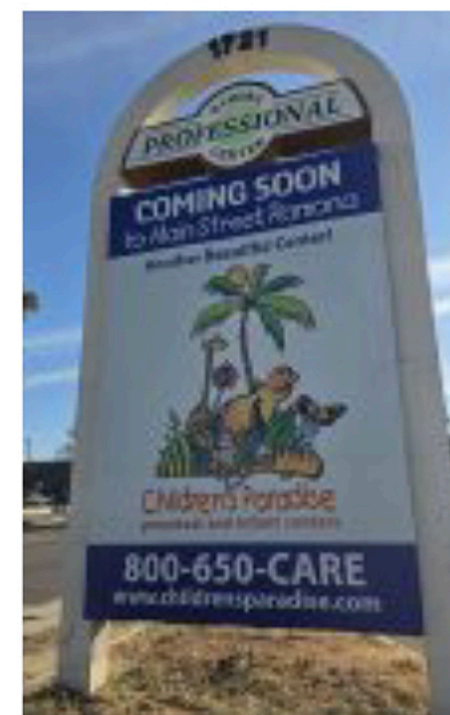
Children's Paradise CEO Julie Lowen, center, is partnering with Ramona-based Woodcrest Homes, Inc. to build the Ramona Children's Paradise.



A groundbreaking ceremony held March 27 was celebrated by community members and Children's Paradise partners.



Taxpayer Advocate Andrew Hayes, center, issues a proclamation on behalf of District 2 county Supervisor Joel Anderson to Julie Lowen and Steve Powell.



A new Children's Paradise childcare center is expected to open in Ramona in May 2027.