

'It's a benefit for children and a support for families.'

Paul Behrman, CVHS

# Head Start adds hours

Program will offer full day of free preschool

By **ELAINE EZERINS**  
Messenger Staff Writer

**S**WANTON — Champlain Valley Head Start (CVHS) will soon offer 30 hours of free preschool at two of their classrooms in Franklin County, Swanton and St. Albans, thanks to a federal duration grant.

CVHS is a program of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, providing comprehensive services, including early education, health and nutrition, family engagement and social services to pregnant women, children from birth to age five and their families throughout Franklin, Grand Isle, Chittenden and Addison Counties.

Head Start created the early learning centers in Swanton and St. Albans this past September beginning at 20 hours a week, running Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Through the duration grant, the hours can now be extended to a full school day.

CVHS is in the process of hiring additional staff and plans to implement the addition-

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ANDREA HOULIHAN, Photos

Above left, a girl reads a book she received for free from the Franklin Grand Isle Bookmobile during a family dinner at the Champlain Valley Head Start Swanton Early Learning Center Monday evening. Above right, two preschool boys play with blocks at the Champlain Valley Head Start Swanton Early Learning Center Monday.



*A staff member of the Franklin Grand Isle Bookmobile reads to the children enrolled at the Champlain Valley Head Start Swanton Early Learning Center Monday night.*

ELAINE EZERINS, St. Albans Messenger

## School

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al hours this September; however, if the hiring and training process goes smoothly, the new schedule could begin as early as mid to late spring, according to Paul Behrman, the director of Champlain Valley Head Start.

During a dinner at the Swanton Early Learning Center Monday evening, Behrman formally announced the extended day to parents and explained why the extra 10 hours are so vital.

He said research shows children are better prepared for kindergarten and families are better served when preschool is offered for the full day.

Behrman added that if the preschool day can align with the K - 12 school day, it simplifies the process of

getting kids to school for parents and minimizes the number of transitions for the children. He said parents will not have to cobble together preschool and other forms of care for the children in order to have them taken care of during the work day.

In addition, CVHS, which already offers free breakfast and lunch, plans to add an afternoon snack.

"It's a benefit for children and a support for families," he said.

Instead of tacking on an additional two hours per day onto the end of the current schedule, CVHS plans to survey the current families at the learning centers and those in the cue for 2017 to see what kind of schedule would best fit them, according to Behrman.

There is still space at both learning centers for three and four-year-olds, according to Andrea Houlihan, the assistant enrollment manager at CVHS.

CVHS serves families with an annual income within 100 percent of the federal poverty level, and a limited number of families up to 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

A four-person household at 100 percent of the federal poverty level equates to an annual income of \$24,300.

An open house for interested families will be on Saturday, April 1 from 10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. Families can stop by, meet the teachers, see the classrooms, and fill out an application, according to Houlihan.