



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Clark College Early Childhood Education program specialist Andrea McAllister leads the college's youngest learners in a song during the groundbreaking ceremony for the college's new Early Learning Center on Sept. 13. Clark ECE program specialist Paul Caggianese (far right) listens. Laurie Cornelius, director of services for children and families at Clark College, is at the podium on the far left.

Youth help celebrate ground breaking for new learning center at Clark College

Program provides early intervention services to the Washougal School District

By HEATHER ACHESON

Post-Record staff

As Clark College embarked on construction of the first phase of its new Early Childhood Learning Center, word came that a significant donation was made to help fund the second phase.

The early childhood education and family life departments provide a curriculum and a learning laboratory for early childhood educators, guide and partner with community parents and families, and equip children with what faulty members describe as a full spectrum of skills and training for life.

Phase I of the project will include two classroom spaces, a large multi-purpose room, kitchen and resource center. There will also be an outdoor

play environment with a sensory herb garden, live willow hut, rock spiral area for storytelling, bubbling creek bed with hand pump and a tiered hill for climbing and playtime.

"For more than a decade, it has been our dream to have a new Early Learning Center facility," said Laurie Cornelius, Clark College director of children and family services. "It is exciting to know that our new learning environment will fully support our program and our aspirations for our students."

The state of Washington provided \$1 million in matching funds for the Early Learning Center, and during the ground breaking it was announced that an anonymous donor had contributed \$1.1 million. A total of \$1.2 million has now been raised, with the end goal being \$3.8 million for phase 2 of the project.

Clark College President Robert K. Knight stressed the importance of donations of all kinds.

"At a time when our state funding continues to decline, it's clear that do-

nor support will be vitally important to our future—for today's students and to help us meet our region's needs in the future."

According to Clark College Vice President of Instruction Dr. Rassoul Dastmozd, the child and family studies program is a lab school where Clark students have the opportunity to put theory into practice by working with children and families.

"This is a unique approach, which is considered a best practice throughout the U.S. in order to meet the needs of today's students and prepare them for the work they will do after graduating," he said. "It will be important to successfully complete both phases of this exciting, learning-focused project."

The program also provides early intervention services for children from birth to age 3 through a contract with Education Service District 112 for services in several school districts in Clark County, including Washougal.