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**SMALL TALK FOR A BIG WORLD**

Grand Haven Christian to offer Small Talk for Kids Program

**May 12, 2009. Grand Haven MI** - Infants are born with the capacity to distinguish any sound from any world language. However, as they grow, they begin to focus on the sounds and words unique to their native language, while their brains' ability to access the "unused" sounds slowly fades.

Precisely why Jonathan Koop founded *Small Talk* - World Language for Kids. "Based on the latest research," says Koop. "The 'language learning window' is open, say, from infancy to three or four years old. That's why we started *Small Talk*, which offers classes for the youngest infants through age five."

Koop, a Holland, Michigan native, began *Small Talk* in the Spring of 2008, and now is proud to announce Grand Haven Christian will join area schools in offering Small Talk for Kids programs. "This is a wonderful opportunity for the entire Tri-Cities area", says Grand Haven Christian School Board President Deborah Erickson, "*Small Talk* is an innovative program that Grand Haven Christian brings to our community and is available to everyone, including families not currently enrolled at GHCS."

*Small Talk's* classes are tailored to three specific age groups within the 0-5 age range. Lilah Ambrosi, who heads up *Small Talk's* curriculum development and teacher training, has applied her past experience as one of the founding teachers and former principal of Ada Vista Elementary, Forest Hills Public School's Spanish immersion program. "The *Small Talk* curriculum is based on the latest linguistics research," says Ambrosi. "But the overall objective of every *Small Talk* class is FUN."

Indeed, every 50-minute class is loaded with song, dance, games—everything that excites and engages a young child. Parent participation is mandatory, as well, so mom or dad can encourage and play along with their child. But Koop stresses that amid the fun, real learning is taking place.

"It's a balancing act," states Koop. "Our instructors are masters at knowing how to deliver language training to each age group, without losing the children's interest. And that's training that will stick with these kids throughout their lives."

Research backs him up. Everything from increased brain development, to better fluency if the child continues in a second language, to more cultural awareness and sensitivity—even better performance in school—are just some of the benefits linked to learning language at a young age.

Additionally, in an increasingly interconnected world and globalized marketplace, the benefits of proficiency in other languages and cultures are immense.

"We're proud to be helping fill a niche, while also helping kids get a jump start on languages and learning as a whole," says Koop.

Rick Geertsma, Grand Haven Christian School Principal is excited about the program. "This extracurricular program is an important starting point for Spanish at Grand Haven Christian. We are exploring options for working Spanish into our elementary school curriculum. It is our goal to have students at the Spanish 101 level or better before entering high school."

Small Talk is proud to partner with Grand Haven Christian School to offer programs starting in the fall of 2009. More information, including links to videos and a survey to gauge community interest can be found online at <http://www.grandhavenchristian.org>.

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