

Owners of Just 4 Fun Children's Center say they will close business this week due to lagging attendance

The sluggish economy has taken its toll on a popular Grafton day care and play center.

Just 4 Fun Children's Center, which has operated out of the former Leeson Electric Co. plant at 2100 Washington St. since October 2006, will close its doors at the end of this week.

"It's the tough economic times everyone is going through," said Lynn Neumann, who owns and runs the business with her husband Larry.

"We're just not able to keep going with fewer families able to bring their children here."

Just 4 Fun Children's Center has offered a variety of indoor facilities, including a day care and learning center, playground and King's Corner bookstore, which is operated as a separate business.

The bookstore, which is run by Barb Batzko, will also close.

Just 4 Fun leased about 10,000 square feet of the 231,000-square-foot building, with 8,000 used for the playground, which had been open to the public six days per week.

The business has 13 full and part-time employees.

Neumann said that until recently the day care service was used by about 40 families. However, attendance had fallen off dramatically at the playground, which was also used for birthday parties and other events.

"At one time we would have as many as 70 kids per day there, and it was down to 20 or 25," she said.

Unable to pay their rent, the Neumanns were sued by Oakridge Equities, which owns the building. The firm is seeking \$180,000 in back payments and has been negotiating with the couple for months to reach a settlement.

Financial trouble shuts day care center

Written by Steve Ostermann

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“It’s a sad, difficult situation, and we just have to close,” Neumann said. “It’s not the landlord’s fault. We wouldn’t have been able to open at all if it wasn’t for them.”

Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said his staff was approached by several other property owners interested in providing a new location for Just 4 Fun.

Although Neumann said she and her husband considered exploring that option, they decided not to try another site.

“It’s not something we can do at this time,” she said. “Even if we wanted to, a lot of the families have already gone to different day care providers.

“It’s something we might look at in the future, but not right now.”