

Bus full of fun, fitness

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By Paula Scully, Staff Writer

TUCKERTON — Serenity liked playing and singing "George of the Jungle."
Layla loved the flips.

Korral loved the trapeze and Dylan loved the activity called the washing machine, a doughnut-shaped activity in which the children sing about one of their friends being "in the washing machine, washing machine" and push until they all laugh.

The children were excited Thursday, when the Fun Bus pulled into the Kangaroo Kourt Preschool parking lot for some fitness on wheels.

Karen Wilson, the owner of Kangaroo Kourt Preschool, saw the colorful green bus at a Manahawkin fall festival and arranged to bring it to the children.

"I took the 2- and 3-year-olds out," she said. "At first, they were a little 'stand-offish.' Once they were able to play with the basketball net, they loved it. They attach a little circle swing to the bus, a trapeze, rings. They put them one at a time in a thing called a doughnut and pretended they were in a washing machine."

The bus was originally a Little Egg Harbor school bus. The company is franchised and buys the buses, which are then completely refurbished inside and out. The seats are removed, the floors carpeted, walls padded, and gym mats, gym equipment and sound equipment are brought in.

"We'll be working with the county-run program in summer," Leiter said, "where they will have me at several different locations. One of them is Little Egg Harbor. I think most of the programs are in Toms River but the county is trying to change that and offer some things down here as well.

"I'm from Barnegat and the bus is parked in Manahawkin, so we're local," she added.

Leiter and an assistant are Fun Bus certified and show the children how to use the equipment.

"They just love that," she said.

"If they find a program that really gets them excited about fitness, our hope is that they will continue that when they get older all their lives, rather than sitting inside," Leiter said. "It also helps with their self-esteem. A lot of times I hear on the bus, 'No, I can't do that,' and then when they 'do that,' they are so excited.

"And it helps with their motor skills, coordination and social skills," she said.

Lisa Cirillo, a teacher at Kangaroo Kourt, said the children are still talking about the fun they had.

"They're talking about it now," she said. "It's cute because one of them still has the stickers on."