



Square One, Holyoke, MA

Floor Design Reflects Name Change at Holyoke Childcare Center

When designers at Dietz & Company Architects, Inc. began working on an interior design plan for a new childcare center in Holyoke, MA, they incorporated a pattern of colored squares in classroom floors. Little did they know how appropriate that single design element would be.

Originally called Springfield Day Nursery, the center changed its name to Square One in 2007 to reflect its expanded mission to provide quality early education and afterschool programs, family support services, health and fitness resources and a voice in the community for at-risk children and their families. These services are offered in centers, family homes, schools and other community-based organizations.

According to Architectural Intern Andrea Michael, "We came up with a design for the new center that uses square inlays of brightly colored nora[®] tiles against a neutral field without knowing that the organization was planning to change its name. The people at the center were so glad that our design so perfectly reflected their new name."

Square One's newest center in downtown Holyoke provides early education and care for children from four weeks to five years of age, Monday through

Friday. The downtown Holyoke location serves 76 children, with a capacity for 104, and employs a staff of 20. Opened a year ago, the center is part of a three-building complex owned by Holyoke Health Center and is housed on the first floor of what was once a furniture store and later a pharmacy.

"The first time I saw the building," recalled Michael, "it had been completely gutted. It was one big open space that we partitioned into six classrooms and finished with materials that met our firm's commitment to green design and provided health benefits to the children who attend the center.

"Many children in the Pioneer Valley area suffer from asthma, so it was important that the center be as green as possible in terms of indoor air quality," she explained. "That's one of the big reasons that we recommended the installation of nora flooring." The more than 15,000 square feet of noraplan[®] environcare, noraplan classic and noraplan uni that run throughout the daycare facility are GREENGUARD Indoor Air Quality Certified[®] and California 01350 compliant, contributing to good indoor air quality.



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Michael added, "When we went in to see the floor right after it was installed, it was amazing that you could not smell anything. Usually, when you enter a building immediately following a flooring installation, you smell all the chemicals; but not in this case. I thought that was great. We also noticed how soft and quiet the floor is, which we thought were particularly good qualities for a facility used by young children."

In addition, the floor coverings feature a unique, dense, nonporous surface that resists dirt and stains and never needs waxing or sealing. "With this floor," said Janalee Bachand, center director of the Square One Holyoke facility, "we don't have to worry about asthma problems and the buildup of dirt that can contribute to these illnesses in children."

"As for the maintenance, I think it's just wonderful. I've worked in centers before that had linoleum and other types of flooring tiles that needed stripping, cleaning, waxing and buffing. With the nora floors, we don't need to take those time-consuming and labor-intensive steps. Maintenance is much simpler, and a year after our facility opened, the floors look as nice as they did the day we opened, in spite of the heavy foot traffic through our building."

The colors, too, are appealing to both Bachand and Michael. "The selection of colors and patterns was really fun to work with, especially with this project," said Michael. "We selected a neutral field and

then chose six different colors, one for each classroom, and used a single accent color on one wall and in the square pattern we created in the floors."

According to Bachand, the square pattern goes through the doorway and spills out into the hallways, helping to guide parents and children to the appropriate classroom. "The bright, beautiful colors make it easy for us to tell parents where to go, and it's a great educational tool for the children as well as they learn their colors."

nora floor coverings run throughout the childcare center. "It's everywhere," Michael said, "along with norament stairtreads and nora cove base." Together, these products make up a unique flooring system in which floor coverings and accessories are compatibly matched to satisfy different functional requirements in a coordinated design.

"We have a beautiful space for our children," said Bachand, "and one that provides a safe, nurturing environment for them every day. The floors play an important role in creating this environment, contributing to good indoor air quality and ensuring slip resistance and continued good looks despite the numbers of people who walk through our doors daily. We're all proud of this space and so happy to be here."