

# Sky Academy celebrates with open house

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On Monday, students enrolled at Sky Academy will begin the school year. Prior to that they will make a big splash in the pool at South County Family YMCA campus, where the academy is located.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony today at 9 a.m. will launch the new charter school. All parents and children are invited. A pool party will be held with the teachers and principal, followed by refreshments and more fun events.

While Sky Academy opens its doors to its first students Aug. 22, its goals were set some time ago.

The newest tuition-free charter school in Sarasota County is one with a unique philosophy — the integration of the whole wellness aspect of a child.

“This concept was tested in Naperville, Ill.,” said Ken Modzelewski, YMCA CEO. “It shows that kids who exercise regularly perform better on tests.”

Students at Sky Academy will have two physical education classes per day, and in addition to the physical aspect of wellness will be taught how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, both through diet and life choices.

“We’re providing healthy lunches, and our plan is to prepare food here at school,” said Olek



PHOTO COURTESY OF SKY ACADEMY

**This wall welcomes students to the Sky Academy in Venice.**

Bula, principal of Sky Academy. “We’ll be serving whole-grain products, and being careful on sugar and salt content.”

“We’re also looking at using locally grown

fruits and vegetables,” Modzelewski said.

“Diane Cogburn, a registered dietitian, is the person who will be reviewing the nutritional content of each

component,” Bula said.

In association with the healthy lunches, there will be a voluntary breakfast for kids who are dropped off early at school.

Anyone who has middle-school-age children knows how difficult it can be to get them to eat healthy food. That’s why Sky Academy is determined to make sure the nutritional knowledge it’s instilling in the students at school is carrying through to their home life.

“We’re trying to include parents,” said Bula. “We’re looking for our parents to be involved.”

“We’re looking to change that lifestyle for the kids forever,” Modzelewski said.

In conjunction with

that, the partnership between Sky Academy and the YMCA is designed to help the rest of the family live the same healthy lifestyle as the student.

“Ken has been visionary in his inclusion of the families,” Bula said. “They will be receiving a free YMCA membership and free aftercare.”

With the nutritional, physical and academic benefits of attending a school like Sky Academy, it is no wonder its enrollment of 175 sixth- and seventh-graders has already been met and there are dozens on a waiting list.

*Staff Writer Audrey Blackwell contributed to this story.*