

Corolla Charter school on track to open in August

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COROLLA — A new charter school on Currituck County's Outer Banks has hired two teachers and is on track to open in August.

Water's Edge Charter School in Corolla has two teachers hired and 25 students registered. That's less than the 31 students the state has licensed the school for, but more than the 17 that had signed up as of early May.

Charter schools get state and local tax money, but operate independently of local public schools. Charters don't provide transportation, but they do offer programs that aren't available in a traditional public school.

Megan Agresto, the president of the Water's Edge board, said her group pushed for the school in Corolla because of its geographic isolation.

Many parents would leave the village if they had school-age children because their only options were to home school, send their child to Currituck County schools on the mainland, or pay to send them to Dare County public schools and drive south to pick them up and drop them off.

Water's Edge will be housed in a building that until recently was home to a wild horse museum. The 800-square-foot building was originally a schoolhouse as early as 1890. It closed in 1958 because there weren't enough students to support it. Some historians say as many as 65 went to the school there in 1944.

The building is now open to the public most days Monday through Friday as long as volunteers are available to staff it.

The school has been able to meet a \$10,000 challenge by the Outer Banks Conservationists and will be applying for a technology grant from the Outer Banks Community Foundation. Fundraising is important because schools start in August and it may be October before state funds start coming in.

Raleigh Hudock, 25, lives in Kill Devil Hills, and taught last year at Hickory Elementary School in Chesapeake. The drive was 62 miles one way and she taught fourth- and fifth-graders and kids with special needs. Water's Edge will be about 25 miles from her house, but the pay won't be as much but it's more than she'd make in the Dare County schools. With a master's degree and one year of experience she made \$42,000 in Chesapeake. In Dare County it would be \$31,000.

She's excited about exploring alternative methods in education and believe she'll team up well with Mahindra Rock who has experience at teaching gifted students.

“I like the idea of starting a school from scratch,” Hudock said.

In Virginia, Hudock had 27 students in her regular classroom, plus two in special education. At Water’s Edge, there won’t be that many in the whole school.

The teachers will be in the classroom today setting up for the school year.

The school plans a public meeting at the school on Wednesday at 4 p.m. An open house is set for July 23 from 5 to 7 p.m.

School officials say they’re aware of 19 students who are age appropriating to attend Water’s Edge in the 27927 zip code. Currently many of them are home schooled.

Some of the 25 students who have signed up for Water’s Edge come from Dare County.