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## Business owner puts passion for language to work at school

By Amanda Lauer

Christina Moubarak of Appleton has a passion for foreign languages.

The mother of three and owner and director of Belanno, a foreign language school for children ages 4 to 10, coordinated the world language program at Ferber Elementary School this year.

Moubarak is one of many busy parents who pitch in their time at their children's schools all year long. She is one example of how parents can use their skills to help out in a variety of ways during the school year.

Moubarak, an Appleton native, is married to Joseph Moubarak, who works at Kimberly-Clark Corp. as a forecast analyst. He is originally from Lebanon and moved to the United States when he was 21 to attend college at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Their children are Isabella, 8, a second-grader, Andrei, 5, a kindergartener, both attending Ferber, and Nolan, 2.

After graduating from Xavier High School, Moubarak went to UW-Stevens Point with the intent of being a German teacher. She ended up transferring to UW-Green Bay and earned a degree in communications.

"When I got out of college I worked in human resources, which led to a job at the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce where I was in school-to-business partnerships," she said. "We shared offices with SCORE, which is a national organization that helps people start businesses. These people were wonderful, and we had lots of conversations about starting businesses, kind of fueling my fire."

When Moubarak and her husband had their first child she went back to work 25 hours a week at the chamber. After the second child she cut her hours down to 10 to 15 per week. "When I had my third child, I decided it was time to do my own business," Moubarak said.

While Joseph will speak Arabic at times with their children, Moubarak said she doesn't consider their house to be bilingual but rather a global house. The business has been a perfect fit for her.

"It's a chance to help kids have cultural understanding of the world through language learning," she said.

Belanno offers Arabic, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese and Hindi language classes.

Moubarak has tried to use her language and business skills to help in her volunteer work.

"I am involved in the PTA, and I spearheaded the world language program this year. It's like an exploratory language program for kids after school," she said.

Caralyn Karck, a former coordinator of the world language program, said she is grateful Moubarak stepped in and took over the after-school activity so the PTA can provide consistency with its offerings at the school.

"For the kids who participate, it's a great opportunity for them," Karck said.

"I'm also involved in various other PTA activities. I listen to the kids read in both my son's and daughter's class. I took care of the Readers are Leaders program. I volunteer in both classes and did their Junior Achievement and taught that curriculum."

Life balance is always a goal, as it should be for all moms.

"I feel like I've got all the tools for a good balance," Moubarak said.

Amanda Lauer: [pcfeatuers@postcrescent.com](mailto:pcfeatuers@postcrescent.com)