

Compass Early Learning Center is a family tradition in the Walden family. Chad Walden, as well as his daughter McKenzie and son Keegan were all enrolled in the program.

However, Chad's Compass connections run much deeper – four generations to be exact. His grandmother volunteered with the program and his mother also attended. His sister, who even worked there for a time, was enrolled in the program too.

Why are they so enthusiastic about Compass? “It is a staple in the community,” Chad said. “It helps people get the assistance they need during rough times and provides a great education for the kids.”

Although Chad's memories of his own years in the program are faint, he said his experience as a parent was been wonderful from the moment McKenzie began at Compass. Not only did it allow him to work, but he knows his children were highly engaged in learning.

McKenzie and Keegan attended other centers before they were old enough to enroll at Compass, but Chad never felt he could trust other centers the same way he trusted Compass. At one daycare, Chad recalled that Keegan was seated in front of a television when he was dropped off and was still there when Chad picked him up hours later.

But Compass is different. “He is learning so much there,” Chad said. “Especially in the last few months, he has really been working on his numbers and letters.”

Chad is confident that when Keegan leaves Compass, he will have built friendships and be prepared for first grade, just as McKenzie was. He said MCUM's impact on her is evident when she comes with him to pick up Keegan. “She always wants to go in and say ‘hi’ to the teachers.”