

SEE SPORTS

Potosi Boys fall in sectional semis

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SEE PAGE 7A

Maple Street parents react

Uncertainty to future of daycare may lead to drastic choices

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

Worried. Nerve-wracking. Concern.

Those are the first words out of the parents' mouths who have children attending Maple Street Kids Daycare. With the uncertainty of the facility's future, parents are looking at what they may have to do in order to make sure their children are taken care of during the work day.

For many families, the prospect that the daycare may need to close, or reduce the number of spaces it has if it loses its current space in the Lancaster Community Schools Winskill Annex Building at the end of September, the stark choice is possibly one parent leaving their job to watch the kids.

"It's very nerve-wracking," said Megan Case, who has two children at the daycare currently. A legal assistant at the Grant County Courthouse, Case noted that she may have to give up that position if her family cannot find another place for her children to attend.

"I am scared for my job," Case said. She said she has been looking for alternative placements but "you check around and there is a two-year wait list," she remarked.

Daycare has spots few and far between, and for many families it has meant driving out of Lancaster for care, even if they live and work in the community. "If I have to travel out of town, I don't know if it's worth it," Case said.

Matt and Katelyn Haverland are also pondering one of them staying home to watch their two children who currently attend Maple Street Kids

Reaction | SEE 2A



The crowd of all ages listened during presentations for the City of Lancaster meeting to apply to the Dream Up! grant program. The program gives projects \$75,000 for planning, along with additional \$5,000 grants for each participating daycare provider. The deadline to apply is Friday.

Hoping to Dream Up!

Lancaster looks to state program to help creating plan to deal with childcare crisis

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
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"We have to do what we have to do, not talk about where we should be," Lancaster Mayor Stuart Harper told the crowd gathered Tuesday night to help the city apply for the state Dream Up! childcare planning grant program that they should have been at this two years ago. Two years ago, he was just a councilperson, and not mayor, but that looking at what they should have did will not help what needs to be done now.

And what needs to happen now is not only deal with the estimated need for 200 childcare slots in the great Lancaster community alone, but also brace for the possibility of needing

60 more if the city's largest daycare provider, Maple Street Kids, has to close.

With an audience filled with representatives of Maple Street, as well as Giggles and Wiggles Daycare, several business owners, the Lancaster Community School District, and Grant County Government, the crowd talked about the need, while Harper and City Administrator David Carlson urged them to check the boxes next to their names on the sign-in sheets, so they could be part of the committee to execute things.

With the snowstorm last week delaying this meeting, the city is under the gun in applying for this program, as the applications are due Friday.

Harper told the crowd he has been focused on this topic, spending 15 hours on the subject alone last week.

"The city is committed to this," Harper said.

He told the crowd that the problem with childcare is "no one owns daycare as far as being their mission," adding that none of the local governments have it under their duties, and no encompassing organization has it either.

Lancaster is dealing with conditions that have seen a reduction of in-home daycare providers statewide, a 58 percent reduction Harper quoted. "We are losing daycare everywhere in this state," Harper continued.

Carlson stated that this is why

they are attempting to get a \$75,000 Dream Up! grant for the community. He said the money is not for bricks and mortar, which means it cannot cover any capital project, but it would help the community create and implement a plan to have "sustainable daycare in the community."

Carlson noted initiatives like in LaCrosse County, where a countywide daycare advocate position was created to help daycares with issues like licensing, certification and dealing with other red tape.

Carlson thought if something could be set up where communities contributed to the post, much like

Grant | SEE 2A



Evers spotlights solutions to rural childcare problem

Governor touts successes in Richland County

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
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Childcare is an issue across Wisconsin, and across the nation, but for places like rural Wisconsin, it is more a crisis than an issue, as many communities are lacking any adequate care, really putting parents, and employers in a bind.

Spotlighting ways to deal with childcare, and show its importance as he looks to make sure funding is included in the upcoming budget, Gov. Tony Evers was in Richland Center this past Wednesday visiting the Sunshine and Giggles Daycare Center. While touring the center, and interacting with the children who attend the facility, Evers and local officials talked about what they did to try and eliminate Richland Center being designated a childcare desert, which has helped families and businesses.

One of those programs, the Dream Up! planning grant program, is something the City of Lancaster looks to utilize to deal with its own impending daycare crisis. The other two, the companion Partner Up! program to assist businesses who support the families of their workers, and the Child Care Counts program that daycares like Maple Street Kids have used to help supplement their workers' salaries through the pandemic, may be going away after this fiscal year for the state, as all of them were funded by ARPA federal dollars.

For those people who have utilized the programs, it has meant a significant improvement in the number of childcare slots for families, which has led to more available workers for area businesses.

Evers | SEE 11A

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The student cast of the Missoula Childrens Theatre production of The Jungle Book have been sequestered in the Hillery Auditorium afternoons this week, as they ready for this weekend's performance. There were 91 youth who participated in tryouts Monday.



Missoula's Jungle Book takes stage Saturday

Ever been abandoned in the jungle, adopted by wolves, taught by a bear, befriended by a panther, and chased by a tiger? In the Missoula Children's Theatre musical adaptation of The Jungle Book, Mowgli the man-cub has all these adventures and more.

The children of the Lancaster area will take to the stage in the Hillery Auditorium this coming Saturday, March 18, with performances at 2 and 6 p.m. This is the first performance for Missoula in Lancaster in three years, and the admission is free to all.

Donations will be accepted at the door.

Join Mowgli as he escapes from the Monkey-People, outwits a tiger, enlists the help of a rock-python, explores what it means to be human, and learns a lesson from the brave mongoose Rikki-Tikki-Tavi. Original music and rollicking humor give new life to the classic tale by Rudyard Kipling.

It wouldn't be the Jungle Book without Mowgli, played by Austin Busch, who is joined by Bagheera, played by Reece Krantz.

They go up against Shere Khan, played by Brynnea Cook-McCullick.

There is Tabaqui, played by Natalie Koeller, and Akela, played by Adelyn Spurgeon.

The Young Mowgli is played by Cayden Holmes.

Rikki-Tikki is played by Hanley Bahl, while Nag is performed by Evelyn Mish, The character of Nagaina is played by Maggie Nelson, while Darzee is played by Bristol Johnson.

The character Hathi will be portrayed by Lydia Muldoon, while Buck is played by Reagan Nemitz.

The character of Mother Wolf is played by Natalie Walloff, while Father Wolf is portrayed by Jaicee Laufenberg.

We have the Wolf Pack: Camrie Nielsen, Georgia Ihm, Malaina Wiest, Carson Mish, Madelyn Molzoff, Ava

O'Connell, Jaymasen Nickel, Cassidy Rouse, Maggie Doll, Collin Crapp, Brielle Mergen, Eleanor Bernhardt.

Then there are the Wolf Pups: Cedar Allbee, Morgan Fager, Leyton Mumm, Kayhill Landon, MaKenna Wickwire, Adelynn McLimans.

We have Kaa: Natalie Pennekamp, Cassidy Crooks, Mercedes Holmes, McKinnley Mumm, Selena Ihm, Braelyn Crubel, Londyn Mumm, Abigail Varnum, April Flores, Mary Ann Buss, Lily O'Connell, Palmer Wilson.

There are the Bander Log: Fritz Dreher, Bronson Crubel, Elsa Miller, Olivia Kipper, Ryker Cooley, Jordyn Laufenberg, Macy Taylor, Adalee Dreher, Paisley Holmes, Claire Puetz, Trianna Bunts, Margaret Dieter, Aubrey Koeller, Elsie Wickwire, Emersyn McLimans, Tessa Dixon.

The Student Directors for this production are: Reanna Dollar, Michell Mendez, Emily Mendez, Sophia Varnum.

Reaction

FROM PAGE 1A

as well. Cutting down to one income would also mean several cutbacks to the family budget.

"If we don't have daycare, we have to think about the worst-case scenario," said Matt, noting he and his wife discussed one of them quitting their job to be home for their children. "Either me, or my wife are quitting our jobs."

The Haverlands made sure to plan ahead to get a slot for their oldest early on, because they would have faced steep waiting lists.

For Matt, he sees how much his oldest loves going to Maple Street. "He comes home and talks about playing with his friends," said Matt, adding how much he loves the teachers at the daycare. "It will be tough to see my daughter grow up without the same experience," he noted.

For Ashley Hochhausen, the whole thing is deja vu, as she already had to deal with her first daycare provider in Cassville deciding to do something else. "I am very worried," said Hochhausen, who works at Grant Regional Health Center.

She was luckily able to get into Maple Street with her first child, and because they

prioritize families of existing students, her second child was slated in.

At the hospital, Hochhausen said she knows of six staffers who have children at Maple Street Kids, and along with them there are other nurses who are already dealing with the loss when their in-home daycare providers deciding to move on.

"We are going to have a job crisis in this community," Ashley said.

Currently, one of the most in-demand jobs in the region are nurses and CNAs, as hospitals, nursing homes, and county health departments are all seeking people in the field.

Hochhausen said she thought about another child someday, but with the current condition and uncertainty in the childcare market, it seems impossible. "I wanted to grow my family, but that does not see possible."

Each one of these parents has attempted to participate in the Maple Street Kids building project, a proposed \$1.9 million center to be built on Schacht Field. They have been attempting fundraising and other efforts to get the public to know, but the effort is still getting off the ground.

Due to the concern of the status of the original boilers in the 1925 Building, the Lancaster Community School

District does not want to keep the building open in perpetuity, and told the representatives of Maple Street Kids they would want to close the building at the end of September if the building fundraising project is not making progress.

The parents see the \$1.9 million number as daunting, and wonder if there are alternatives. "I think \$1.9 million is unfeasible," Hauchhausen said.

"\$1.9 million is a lot of money," added Case.

"I hope the community comes together," Case continued, noting they need more time in the current building to get a project going. "We just need more time."

"We need more community support than we have now," Hochhausen said. She noted that if the daycare and the district could come to an agreement to allow the daycare to stay longer and cover the utility costs for the building, since they are now the sole occupier, it would allow them more time to look at options.

Hochhausen wondered why in the state of Iowa, there have been announcements of daycares going in different communities, but there is such a lack of support in Wisconsin.

"To have people stay in Lancaster, we need people to come together," stated Case.

Grant

FROM PAGE 1A

they do with the Grant County Economic Development Corporation, it would allow for the county, and not just Lancaster, deal with this issue.

Many of the business owners noted how much the lack of daycare affected their business. Business owners Pete Hoffman and Kyle Vesperman talked about their staff who are trying to juggle childcare and their jobs.

Lancaster Community Schools District Administrator Rob Wagner noted how many younger teachers the district has that are dealing with daycare issues. "Our staff has a need for daycare," Wagner said.

Also in the audience were Patrick and Beth Gilles of In the Beginning Child Care in Boscobel. They noted they see the need in Lancaster, and have looked to see about possibly opening a location.

"No one is doing this as a hobby anymore," Patrick Gilles said, noting the decline of in-home daycare providers.

Mike Steffel, wearing two

hats as both the president of the Lancaster Community School Board, as well as a part-owner of Giggles and Wiggles, noted that there is simply a lack of building space for daycares to operate in the community. That, along with a lack of quality of staff, makes the situation difficult to deal with.

Renae Blaschke, Early Childhood Education Instructor at SW Tech, noted that the issue has been a problem for years, but that since 2020 and COVID, the issue has only heightened across the region.

The odds of the city getting the grant are likely steep - statewide, there are only nine grants that will be given out this spring. For past recipients, like Richland County, it was a multiple community effort, and in their case, they had a childcare task force set up for years prior to the grant.

The awards are expected to be announced in spring.

Carlson noted that while they may not get a grant, the community will have a framework in place, and individual volunteers to continue to try and tackle this subject as a result.

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Shullsburg offers example to small districts on setting up childcare in-school

Space limitations will limit growth of program

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

Individuals in Cassville continue to work to try and create some solution for the Mississippi River community when it comes to childcare.

The group of volunteers has spent much of the past year attempting to get a childcare center set up in the community, first approaching St. Charles School, and when that school wanted to look at different educational opportunities, began talking with the Cassville School District, going before the school board earlier this month.

The group is planning to tour two recent operations of school districts running daycares within the school - Southwestern and Shullsburg. Southwestern has been running for two years, and a mix of space and need has led success for that program. Shullsburg, meanwhile, is just starting to host children, and may serve as a closer example to Cassville, as unlike Southwestern, is not in the direct path of a large city people may be traveling to for work, and show physical space constraints may limit how much the center can grow.

Last week, the Shullsburg Schools Childcare program marked one month of handling infants, toddlers and preschool age students. For Daycare Director Sheena Long, that month was a success, after a culmination of months of planning, building, and readying the space and program for its first students.

Long was hired last August to set up the program, which the Shullsburg School Board had approved the program emulating the school-run childcare program that has been running in Southwestern for the past several years. Getting started Aug. 15, Long, who had been working in preschools in Illinois previously, got up to speed on what would be needed to convert classrooms in the elementary wing of the school into space that could be used for childcare.

The childcare program has set up in three classrooms that are part of the addition to the elementary wing that was added as part of the 1996 renovation of the school buildings. In total there are three rooms - one for infants up to the age 15 months, a toddler room that handles children 15-30 months, and a preschool room that handles children up to four (with some children who are part of the district's four-year old kindergarten coming into the room part-time after they are



Shullsburg Schools Daycare students enjoying lunch in their classroom. The program has been in operation for one month, and already has a waitlist for infants.

in there).

Long went over that part of the delay was on supplies to convert the rooms into proper spaces, remnants of the supply chain issues in a post COVID world. Items like sinks needed to be added for hand washing after diaper changes, an exit door needed to be installed for the infant room in case of emergencies, while a portion of the old practice field and track that runs outside the addition was fenced in to provide children in the daycare programs their own space to play outside (the program will be applying for grants to help cover the costs of playground equipment).

The daycare is having all food preparation handled by the school cafeteria, which meant they did not have to add three sinks for food preparation. The district also added a washer/dryer for the program.

Then there was a bunch of furniture and items for the rooms. Long's background with preschools in Illinois was focused on social and emotional learning, and one of the items she is emulating are the stations, or centers in the rooms that cover different educational aspects the daycare is providing.

"They are getting that academic piece," Long stated, noting that there are social skills the youth are picking up to put them ahead when they join either the 4K or kindergarten programs. "They are playing and interacting....the kids are learning to take turns, they are learning how to sit for a story, they are learning to work with one another," Long said.

Long has set up the rooms

which are in line with the Illinois rules, which has a stricter level of guidelines for programs than in Wisconsin. In what normally would be four stations, Shullsburg has seven stations in the room, which include art, science, library, dramatic play, sensory, and block to same several. "I think its great to have different areas," Long said of the stations. "They are learning through play."

Another area where Long said there were some growing pains was filling out the staff for the start. She hired a deputy, Laura Reuter, who has 15 years experience in daycares in the area, but a few of the positions only were filled later in the process.

In total, the daycare program has four full-time, and four part-time employees - the director and deputy, as a full-time teacher in both the infant and toddler rooms.

"We were worried about hiring staff members," Long remembered, noting that because of what people get paid in daycare is not as high as it should be in her mind.

One of the issues when it comes to staffing is the ratio for younger children - for infants, there needs to be one instructor for every four children, and there are limitations on how many children can be in a given room.

Of the four programs the daycare is now operating, the two in the most demand have been the infant care, which already has a wait list, and the after school care, which has been operating since the fall.

For the infant room, there are currently four enrolled, and the idea is to add another four slots this fall. Those slots are already taken, since the program has a wait list of four already one month running.

After school care, which runs from the end of school until 5:30, when the daycare program ends, has between 10-12 youth coming in every day. It is an extension of the before-school program, which the district has had for the past two years, which opens at 6:30 a.m. for children.

Long is expecting to utilize high school students when the summer comes, when they will have an all-day service for school-age children, and she is expecting between 15-17, although the true number is not known yet, as the district has not yet sent letters home to tell parents about the program.

One thing that they daycare program has done is give parents flexibility one when they come, which as a result, has given the program flexibility. For the toddler program, a few of the children come certain days in the week, and others come on the opposite days, which has led to a consistent full-time equivalent.

For those in preschool they are often picked up around when school is let out, which opens the space up for the after-school students coming in.

Currently, the district has not licensed the daycare. School districts do not need to license their own-run daycare facilities, but not doing so limits what programs they can apply to get assistance. It also means that families on assistance programs cannot get aid to help cover their daycare fees from the state.

Long said that the school administration, school board, and the community have been very helpful during the setup process, asking what is needed, with numerous members in the community asking if there are toys or supplies they need.

"Our administration has done great," Long said. "They have allowed us to develop."

One area the daycare is lacking is in space for potential growth. In using the three classrooms, there is much more space they could utilize to add spaces for children. If the summer schoolbag program pushes above things could be crowded, but more classrooms will be available.

However, adding infant space would mean creating another room, and there is not much more that could be done other than adding onto the school.

Watch for spongy moths

MADISON - The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is encouraging property owners to examine their trees for egg masses of spongy moth (formerly known as gypsy moth) and plan ahead if control measures are needed.

Spongy moth thrive in warm and dry weather, but even with "average" weather conditions this spring and summer, the outbreak is likely to continue and spread.

Property owners who have oak, birch, crabapple, aspen, willow and linden (basswood) trees should be particularly watchful as the caterpillars of this invasive insect prefer these species but they will also feed on many other kinds of trees and shrubs.

To know if spongy moth are on your property, look for egg masses which are tan-colored lumps about the size of a nickel or quarter. These masses are found on trees, buildings and other outdoor objects and may also be found inside protected places such as firewood piles and birdhouses.

Egg masses produced in 2022 will feel firm and appear darker in color than older egg masses, which appear faded, feel spongy, and do not contain viable eggs.

Insecticide treatments, including foliage sprays and soil and trunk injections, may be a suitable option. An egg mass oil can also be applied to prevent the masses from hatching. A professional treatment is likely needed when there are high numbers of egg masses on large trees. When low or moderate numbers of egg masses are present, physical controls can often be used to reduce pest impacts and make insecticide unnecessary.

Insecticide treatments are most effective when the caterpillars are small (mid-to-late May in southern counties and late May-early June in northern counties).

Host trees that are not treated and lost a lot of leaves and/or were drought-stressed in 2022 are at a higher risk of dying, especially if they lose a lot of leaves again in 2023.

UWP to host FFA Career Development Day

The University of Wisconsin - Platteville will host the FFA Career Development Events March 16. This annual event serves as area requirements for agricultural mechanics, dairy cattle, floriculture, horses, livestock, milk quality and products, veterinary science, and wildlife teams seeking to qualify for these state events. Over 1500 students from across Wisconsin will participate in this year's event.

Dr. Mark Zidon, Program Coordinator and Professor of Agricultural Education, has been coordinating the Platteville event for 33 years. "Career Development Events give students a chance to demonstrate the wide variety of career and leadership skills that they gain through participating in FFA and agricultural education programs in their

schools. These are skills that they'll use for the rest of their lives, regardless of the field they choose," Zidon said. He added, "It's also a great opportunity for students to see the UW-P campus. Many of the university students who help put on this event each year first visited Platteville when they competed as high school students themselves."

Zidon said "This event could only happen with the help of an amazing number of community partners who host and help out with events. Some of these partners include J&J Horse Stables, Weber's Meats, the University of Wisconsin-Platteville College Farm, staff and faculty of the School of Agriculture, multiple university student organizations, the City of Platteville, and agriculture teachers from across the state."

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Evers

FROM PAGE 1A

“There just wasn’t any centers, just a lot of in-home care - just two or three kids, nothing at this scale,” County Board Chairperson Marty Brewer stated in the hallway at Sunshine and Giggles, which opened last September in the former Richland Center Elementary School building.

Because of that designation, parties came together five years ago to set up the Childcare Taskforce for the county.

“We had no centers, and only three regulated daycares in homes,” said UW-Extension Agent Chelsea Wunnicke about the conditions five years ago, noting for most people, their only option was either family or small in-home care being offered. “For people moving into the community, they were like ‘how do you find childcare?’ Well, you have to know somebody or do it through word-of-mouth. That is just not sustainable,” Wunnicke said.

Wunnicke noted that dealing with childcare is difficult because the issue is personal to some, but not personal to others, and that has left the common thought

that it falls on the shoulders of the parents who need the care.

“The old way of thinking is childcare is ‘my responsibility as a parent,’” Chelsea shared. “‘I have to figure it out, and I should just do that.’ As a society, we think there is a collective responsibility for children from kindergarten to 12th grade - even if I do not have kids, or my kids are grown, I want my school system to be successful.”

For Richland County, it needed to be more collective, because childcare was also an economic issue in this tight labor market.

“We have been hearing that from businesses - we have open jobs. First shift, second shift, but we don’t have anyone to work,” Wunnicke stated. “If people don’t have trusted people, watching their kids, they are not going to be able to come to work, as much as they want to.”

“The economic side to that is....giving people a childcare center so they are able to work,” added Brewer.

So five years ago the taskforce was set up. And when ARPA funding came from the Federal Government to deal with the impact of the pandemic, Richland County set aside \$300,000 for competitive grants for

daycares to build or expand their operations.

It isn’t just money, however, that the taskforce was helpful with, it was networking between businesses, assistance programs, and getting information to the community to know the importance of working on childcare programs.

That culminated in the opening of Sunshine and Giggles last September, one of four childcare facilities that have opened or expanded in the county as a result of the taskforce.

Jennifer Schrock, operator of the daycare along with Cheyenne Templin, noted that after opening her first childcare facility in Center, she was looking to open a second when her daughter showed an interest in expanding the business.

They had looked at Reedsburg and Richland Center, and when looking in the latter community, they found a level of support to help them set up.

In working with Chelsea, Jennifer learned of the elementary school building possibly being available, which was a better option than the other space she was looking at, which would have been a rental.

The availability of the school building was perfect

timing and a perfect fit - the district had done updates in the past decade, and since it was built for small children, everything was at the right size.

Wunnicke noted that the school district was looking at different ideas - sell it for housing, or turning it into a parking lot. The community really embraced it being used for young children as a daycare.

One of the people most enthused was Richland Center Mayor Todd Coppernoll, who was pointing out his second grade classroom to the governor during the visit.

“It has been a tremendous addition to the city,” Coppernoll said of the increased offerings of childcare like Sunshine and Giggles, which along with Discovery Playschool, are giving the community childcare centers in desperately needed.

“I do hear from the plant managers that it has helped improve them finding workers they are in desperate need of,” Coppernoll stated. “If you are a mom with a child, you are choosing between ‘where do I go with my little one and do I can I take more hours.’ The choice had been made for you, you take care of your child, in the past.”

Coppernoll noted that one can easily see the impact, when parents line up to pick up their children in the afternoons. “It has given these parents a piece of mind, especially about infant care, that we just didn’t have.”

Businesses have embraced the offerings as well. Schreiber Foods, one of the biggest employers in the city, launched a pilot program in Richland Center and Stephenville, Texas, to offer childcare subsidies for their workers. Schreiber will cover up to 50 percent of costs, up to \$5,000 a year per household for employee childcare. They even use a system that directly pays the daycare providers.

Beside young children, the childcare facility also offers after-school care until 6:30 p.m. For Schrock, that use by the community was a bit overwhelming at first.

“We thought we would get all these infants (coming here), and we were ready. It was the after-school program

- we had 30 kids right away signed up for our after-school,” Schrock shared.

That was surprising to them, partially because the school districts they had been operating in, with Wonewoc and Hillsboro, already had robust after-school programs in the school.

Richland Center does not.

“They cannot staff it, but we can staff it, because our staff is already here,” Schrock noted. She said that things work really well between the school and the daycares - the school transports the students to the centers after school, and her staff interacts with the school teachers about the needs of the students.

Wunnicke noted that the after-school care options now mean parents do not have to just rely on their younger children at home after school.

“Some of those kids may be going home and watching themselves at a younger age than they should be,” she said.

Currently, Sunshine and Giggles is licensed for 145, but only has 80 children. Schrock notes that she thinks they will be at capacity by the time they reach their year anniversary, as they are continuing to work to set up classrooms for more children. Supplies for that construction are still strained this time after the pandemic, but she noted they have been able to find staff as they continue to expand the facility. For example, for two new teaching positions they need to fill, they immediately received 10 applicants.

Evers talks about future of programs

Over the past years, the state has offered three different programs to assist communities working on childcare - Child Care Counts, which has been used from everything to help give childcare workers additional funds to capital projects; as well as the tandem of Dream Up! and Partner Up!, which are grant programs that allow communities up to \$75,000 to plan and organize childcare initiatives (while also providing \$5,000 for each corresponding daycare), and also subsidizing businesses who help cover tuition for employees’ children (Partner

“At the end of the day, we are hear to not only take care of these kids for the day, but also take care of their educational needs too.”

—Gov. Tony Evers

Up!). All of these programs were partially funded with Federal funds, and Evers included them in his budget proposal, \$340 million in total.

“There are a lot of childcare deserts,” Evers said of the state, “there is lots of need.”

With ARPA money going away, Evers said it was important to fund these programs outright, to incentivize communities to handle childcare needs in different ways.

Evers talked about when he was a Superintendent in Oakfield, and ways they dealt with childcare issues. “We created space in one of the schools, and we had a daycare in the school run by a private group,” Evers reflected.

He continued, noting the importance of such programs in the early development of youth. “At the end of the day, we are hear to not only take care of these kids for the day, but also take care of their educational needs too.”

He discussed the importance of the social interaction the children get, the lessons they learn about working in an environment with others.

“It’s not babysitting, it’s early childhood education,” Wunnicke said of the early childhood programs. “It’s really critical to have that connection early in their kids’ lives.”

In addition to the importance of the programs for the children, it is also important to have things in place so that interested people can open centers, and keep them going, so that parents do not have to do the nearly impossible to get childcare for their children.

“People were doing extraordinary things to make sure their kids were cared for, but they rather not do that,” Wunnicke remarked. “We need someone that wants to do this.”



Governor Tony Evers meets with children from Sunshine and Giggles Daycare in Richland Center. With assistance from the Child Cares Counts and Partner Up! program, the daycare, which opened last September, has been able to grow to 80 children, and expects to be at capacity of 145 by its one year mark.



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