



Children at Berlin Community Daycare & Preschool enjoy giggles with teacher Gina Daniels.

Community Foundation Offers Grant Relief for Area Childcare Centers

Childcare providers are a backbone of our community. Right now, they are making it possible for parents with essential jobs—healthcare workers, grocery clerks, production workers, and cleaning staff—to work on the frontlines by teaching and caring for our region’s youngest learners while complying with increased social and health regulations. Thirty-nine percent of frontline workers in Wisconsin are parents who depend on some type of childcare to maintain their own employment.

As part of the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation’s efforts to provide COVID-19 hardship relief, grants totaling \$26,650 are helping to sustain nonprofit childcare centers in the Green Lake County area.

Grants were funded by the COVID-19 Green Lake Area Relief Fund and the Basic Needs Giving Partnership within the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation. Nonprofit recipients include Berlin Community Daycare & Preschool, Discovery Preschool, Grace Preschool, and Ripon Children's Learning Center.

"Childcare centers are incurring additional costs during the pandemic such as personal protective equipment and other cleaning supplies and bringing in less tuition revenue due to smaller class size mandates. This funding will help cover some of the additional costs of operating and show our appreciation to childcare workers for their important role," said Amy Putzer, director of programs for the Community Foundation.

Childcare is essential for families and for the broader economy. Group daycare centers operate with high costs, tight revenues, and slim operating margins, even though many childcare educators are paid near-poverty wages. This is because the core factor that drives the quality of care—low child-to-staff ratios—means that these programs are highly labor intensive without economies of scale. Most childcare revenue come from parental fees, which puts a sizable dent in working families' budgets.

"Our Board of Directors voted to not charge families tuition fees when children are quarantined due to contact or exposure here at our center," shared Janice Button, administrative director at Berlin Community Daycare & Preschool. "While this is a great way to help support our families in these unprecedented times, it is a loss of revenue and the grant that we received helped to ease the financial strain on our center due to lost tuition and unbudgeted increases in PPE and sanitization expenses."

Initial funding for the COVID-19 Green Lake Area Relief Fund was generously donated by The McConnell Family Foundation. Thanks to additional donations from local families and businesses along with shopper participation in Crossroads Market's Rooster Round Up Program, grants from the fund to date have topped \$19,000.

The Basic Needs Giving Partnership is investing an additional \$1.275 million dollars in Winnebago, Green Lake and Waushara Counties in 2020-2021. The Basic Needs Giving Partnership within the Community Foundation is supported by the U.S. Venture Fund for Basic Needs, the J.J. Keller Foundation, Oshkosh Corporation, and other community partners.

There are many ways to support our community in this time of need. In addition to considering a gift to the COVID-19 Green Lake Area Relief Fund or "rounding up" when shopping at Crossroads, residents are encouraged to continue to support the charities they care about that are struggling with diminished revenue. For more information on how to donate to the Relief Fund, please visit www.oshkoshareacf.org/fund/covid-19-green-lake-area-relief-fund/.

The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation is a charitable organization that works with hundreds of donors wishing to invest in strengthening our communities.