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Child Care Options Growing in Kalispell

In July 2021, the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce embarked on building the business case for affordable, quality and accessible child care for our community through a 4-month study and action plan development. Action teams formed in February of 2022 and are producing results. Overall, 500 child care openings have been identified to date which should come online in the next 12 – 16 months.

“Last week was a big week for child care in the Flathead Valley! Two of our initiative supporters and members received word that they had received their full-ask grants for ARPA dollars to expand services in the Valley from the Child Care Innovation and Infrastructure Grant Committee. The Bird’s Nest has received \$1 million dollars to expand their capacity as well as Immanuel Lutheran Communities receiving \$869,770 for their child care center,” shared Lorraine Clarno, President/CEO of the Kalispell Chamber.

Mrs. Corrine, owner and director of The Birds Nest, stated “I am so excited that the long-term goal/vision that started 7 years ago is finally becoming a reality. Not only do we have our funding and property lined up, but we also have an architect, engineer, and Geotechnical team drafting plans and getting ready for submittal to the City of Kalispell. We are well on track to open in the Fall of 2023. The money will cover the cost to furnish the new school and cover wages/benefits leading up to our grand opening (expected September 2023)! Not having to finance these two huge costs will allow us to lower our monthly operating costs, pay higher wages to highly qualified staff, and offer scholarships to families who are just outside of the Best Beginnings Scholarship cut off!”

Immanuel Lutheran Communities has been building a business model for the past year to add 74 opportunities for professional care for infants to kindergarteners, Monday through Friday, 6am – 6pm. “It is a unique business plan that involves community partners including the faith community and at least one other business that will offer quality and affordable childcare for our local Kalispell employees,” Jason Cronk, President & CEO stated. “We are working with another organization where these funds will repurpose a space for 74 kids. We are thrilled and very grateful to the Kalispell Chamber for their initiative which has elevated the issue in our community and brought people together to form community solutions.”

“The lack of workforce continues to be our member’s number one priority and child care plays a big part in this crisis. If our initiative has played the smallest part in bringing stakeholders together and driving solutions, we are thrilled,” said Lorraine Clarno. “We have much more work to do but want to thank and celebrate both The Birds Nest and Immanuel Lutheran Communities for their leadership in bringing more access, quality and affordable child care to our community.”