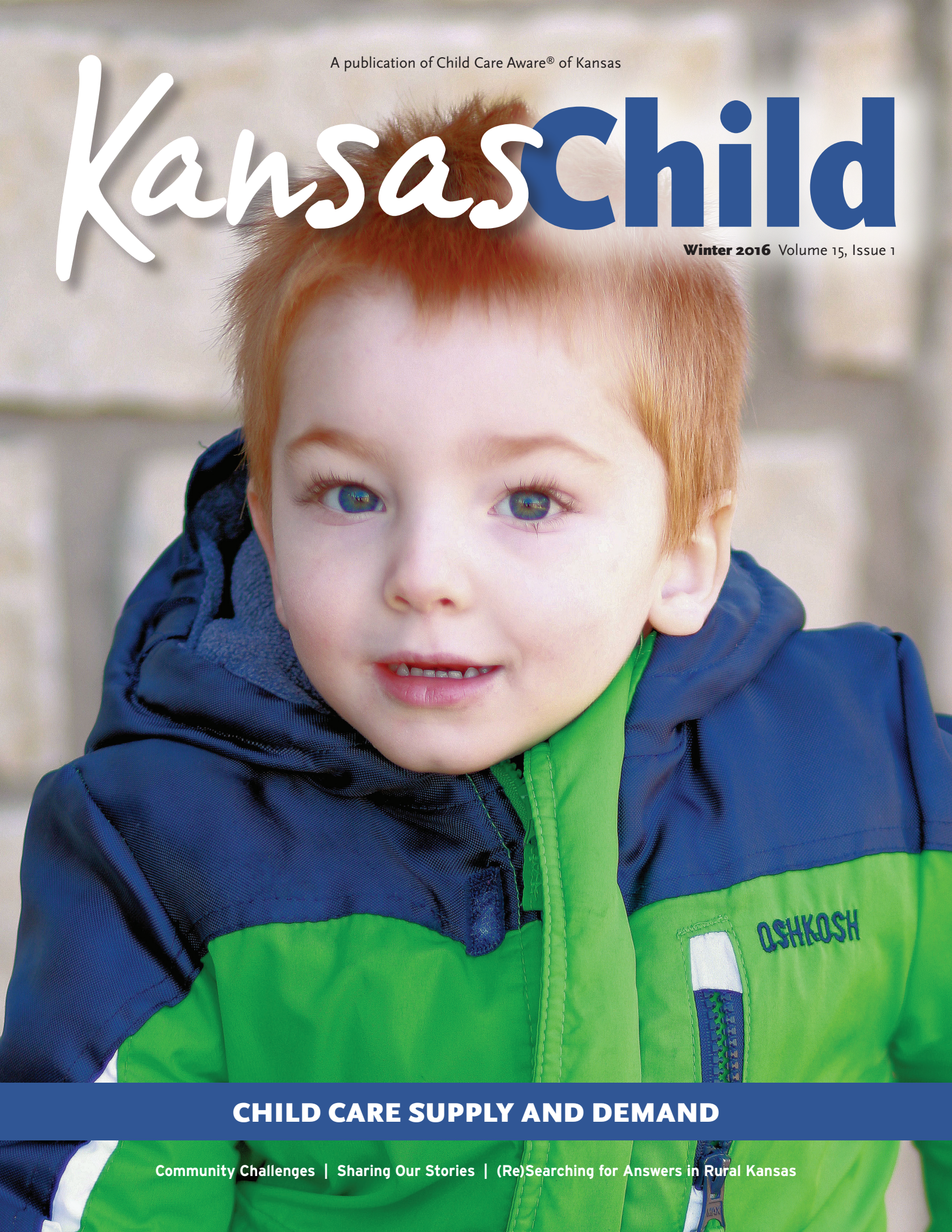


A publication of Child Care Aware® of Kansas

KansasChild

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CHILD CARE SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Community Challenges | Sharing Our Stories | (Re)Searching for Answers in Rural Kansas

Kansas Child
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On the Cover
Jacob Bradbury (age 3), son of
Bobbie Bradbury, enjoys some
outside time at Salina Child
Care Association, Salina, KS.

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care and early education issues and
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discussions within the field and to
help those outside the field gain a
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**LEADELL
EDIGER**

Child Care Aware®
of Kansas

After 25 years in this field, I know that finding quality child care can be hard; it can be frustrating; it is certainly time consuming and of course once it's found, it's expensive! In this issue of *Kansas Child*, we wanted to look closely at the issue of supply and demand for child care across the state.

In her book, *Time to Care - Redesigning Child Care to Promote Education, Support Families, and Build Communities*, author Joan Lombardi states – "Economic forces in child care have been compared with a three-legged stool. The three legs—availability, affordability, and

quality – are interrelated parts of the same system. Whether care is available depends on the supply of providers in a community, access to the care, and whether it is affordable. At the same time, whether families can afford child care depends on the cost of that care and the resources available to help families pay for it. In turn, the quality of care is highly dependent on the cost of providing the service and on what families are willing and able to pay."

I like this image of the three-legged stool — it helps me to think about the kind of balance that we need in our Kansas communities to address today's child care issues.

In Kansas we can't talk about child care without looking closely at two extremes, rural and urban counties. Though both have issues with supply and demand, they differ greatly based on circumstance. With regard to population, our 105 Kansas counties are classified as such: six are urban, ten are semi-urban, twenty-one are densely-settled rural, thirty-two are rural and thirty-six are frontier.

Frontier counties have less than six persons per square mile and are home to roughly 3% or about 9,600 of the state's children under the age of six. Urban counties have 150 or more persons per square mile and are home to nearly 162,000 Kansas children under age six, or 57% of the state total. The issues for families in these population zones are very different. Of the 36 counties that makeup the frontier counties, 26 have no licensed child care centers.

Here are just a few issues Kansas parents face — no matter where they live: limited availability for babies and toddlers; affordability; available care for those working non-traditional hours or for children with disabilities; location — close to work or home; and the most important, quality care that offers parents peace of mind! Let's just say, for parents to find high-quality age-appropriate (especially an infant or toddler) child care, it may take time to search out! Our statewide child care referral can help! A toll-free number where any family, from any county in Kansas, can call to get assistance is available at 1-877-678-2548.

A quick personal story — as you might remember, in the Summer edition of *Kansas Child*, I was awaiting the arrival of my fifth grandchild. Our darling grandson arrived on July 31st weighing just slightly more than 9 pounds! He has been a delight and we're blessed to be able to spend a good amount of time with him watching him grow!

Prior to his mama letting me know that she was pregnant, she had already talked with a center director and put her name on the waiting list! (Notice the words, prior to letting me know!) Although her name was on the waiting list nearly ten months prior to needing care for her baby, as the summer was winding down, she became increasingly concerned that the center she chose would not have a vacancy. At that point, grandma

stepped in, encouraging her to visit several family child

care providers to see if she could find one that would offer the safe and caring environment she sought for her soon to be born baby! I'm pleased to report that we have a happy ending to this story (and grandma played hardly no part in her selection process). Our little guy is now 5 months old and he's thriving in a family child care facility that is truly perfect for them!

A stylized, handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Leadell". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, looping 'L' and a trailing flourish.





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**RACHEL
SCHUMACHER**

Director of the Office
of Child Care

Rachel Schumacher is the Director of the Office of Child Care, where she is committed to increasing access to quality child care that promotes early learning and development of children – from birth through school age – in partnership with their families and communities.

Before coming to the Office of Child Care, Ms. Schumacher was an independent Early Childhood Policy Consultant. She has advised and conducted policy analysis on behalf of national organizations and public agencies to identify and amplify strategies to enhance the lives of young children and their parents by strengthening early childhood systems and services. Prior to launching her consulting business, Ms. Schumacher was a Senior Fellow in Child Care and Early Education at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Rachel has also served as an Early Childhood Policy Analyst at the Children's Defense Fund, Greater Cincinnati Project and as a Legislative Aide in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

Ms. Schumacher has a Bachelor's degree from Brown University and a Master's in Public Policy from the Irving B. Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

Expanding the supply of High-quality

By Rachel Schumacher
Director of the Office of Child Care

Every day, across the country, millions of parents drop their children off in child care centers and homes. The drop-off process doesn't take very long, probably 10 to 15 minutes for most families. In most cases, it's routine and simple. But getting to that point, the point where a parent

has a child care provider she can afford and count on and a setting where she feels safe leaving her children, can be anything but simple.

As a parent, I know firsthand how hard it is to find good information and be confident in our family's child care arrangements, even as the Director of the Office of Child Care (OCC). Here in Washington, D.C., where I both work and live, officials estimate there is just one licensed child care slot available for



child care

every four children under age three.¹ That challenge can be even greater for families living in rural areas with even fewer child care options or for parents of special needs children, infants, toddlers, or care needs outside traditional work schedules. Costs and distances between care settings can be overwhelming at best. Specialized care often costs more, and most parents can't afford to pay the full cost of quality child care.

At the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Child Care, we work with states, tribes, and territories to administer the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program. This program funds child care subsidies for parents who are working or in school as well as funding child care quality improvements for all children. It's essential and vital to our economy, our communities and most importantly, families, that parents are able to find affordable, high-quality child care.

Supply and demand of child care and why it matters

Child care plays a key role in both child development and family economic success. Research tells us that high-quality child care settings improve school readiness for children and can impact outcomes even as those children become adults. And when parents know their children are in a safe and engaging place, they can better succeed in their job or school. When children are learning and parents have the flexibility to work, the economic impact benefits both families and the communities around them.

Unfortunately, many parents have a hard time finding affordable, high-quality child care. This is a supply shortage. A supply

shortage can be in a geographic area, such as a rural area, or it can be among a population, such as low-income families. No matter which kind of supply shortage families are facing, it can mean that parents have no options other than unregulated child care settings that are not subject to state rules. In these kinds of settings, the quality of care can be less than ideal and even compromising to the health and well-being of our children. Supply shortages can impact any community or family, but they're particularly likely to impact:

- parents looking for care for children with special needs;
- parents with infants and toddlers; and
- parents who need care for their children during non-traditional hours.

The supply and demand of child care has a huge impact on American families and on our economy. It's a complicated issue impacted by many factors. But there are things we can do to address supply shortages, and our new child care law has shifted more focus to solving supply problems in child care.

The new child care law and what it means for the supply of child care

In November 2014, Congress passed the bi-partisan Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. The law provides new guidance and requirements for our federal child care program – CCDF. You might hear these new requirements referred to as “CCDF Reauthorization.” Even before the 2014 version, the CCDBG Act was the major federal law authorizing us to work with states, tribes, and territories to provide financial support for child care for low-

Continued on page 6

A Unique Organization... right here in Kansas!

Child Care Aware® of Kansas is unique among organizations serving child care programs, parents and community members in Kansas in the following ways:

- Each region in the state is served by a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R).
- One common toll free number for the state (for FREE child care referrals) and toll free numbers for each CCR&R.
- Standardization and quality assurance for services throughout the state.
- One-to-one parenting advice and consumer education on quality child care, parenting resources and state and community resources.
- Working with any child care program: licensed center-based and family child care programs, registered child care programs, and license-exempt programs.
- Only entity that collects in-depth, accurate data-specific to parent need and provider supply statewide.
- Affiliated with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (Child Care Aware® of America).

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest or check out our website – www.ks.childcareaware.org – for up-to-date information!



¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-sees-surging-demand-for-child-care-services/2015/11/15/016b23d4-8be2-11e5-934c-a369c80822c2_story.html

Continued from page 5

income families and to improve the quality of the child care system for all children.

One of the main purposes of the new law is to get more low-income children into higher quality child care settings.

Congress recognized that supply shortages are a big problem for working

parents, particularly those who are low-income, and addressed the issue in the law. The CCDBG Act requires states to build supply and to improve the quality of child care services for children in underserved areas, for infants and toddlers, for children with disabilities, and for children who receive care during non-traditional hours.

These new supply-building requirements are exciting. For the first time, supply shortages and policies that address them are at the forefront of our national child care policies. But addressing such a challenging, ongoing issue could also be a little daunting, which is why OCC is working with our state partners on some strategies that can meet the new requirements and improve the child care supply for all families.

Strategies to build a high-quality child care supply

There are a variety of ways that states can start to address high-quality care supply shortages. OCC recently released an information memorandum, which is essentially a guidance document, on building the supply of high-quality child

care. That document discusses some ideas and policies the states can use to help make sure more families have access to the care they want and need for their children.

Most effective supply-building process involves three steps:

- 1) identify supply shortages based on data;**
- 2) select the most appropriate strategies to build the supply of high-quality care;**
- 3) and monitor supply building through ongoing evaluation to assess progress towards goals.**

We suggest that the most effective supply-building process involves three steps: 1) identify supply shortages based on data, 2) select the most appropriate strategies to build the supply of high-quality care, and 3) monitor supply building through ongoing evaluation to assess progress towards goals.

Below are some of the short- and long-term strategies that might fit for a particular state or community as they work to build supply:

Start-up investments. Sometimes a child care setting may exist in an underserved area or for an underserved population, but the provider hasn't been



able to achieve the level of quality that would best serve children. In these cases, the provider may need one-time funds to improve the quality of the center or home.

Supporting family child care. Family child care homes are an absolutely essential part of the child care system and are key to addressing supply shortages, especially in rural areas or communities with a shortage of infant/toddler care. Supporting family child care providers and networks is an important part of supply building. Family child care providers are more likely to be isolated and have limited access to information, training, and resources on quality child care, so being proactive in our support of those providers should be a top priority.

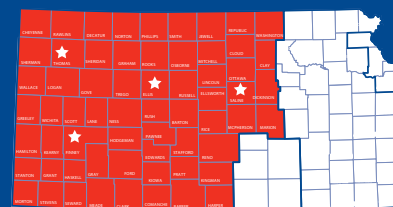
Payment rates and bonuses. For providers within the child care subsidy system, states can use higher payment rates, bonuses, or other financial incentives to make it more financial feasible to serve families in the CCDF program. With improved payment rates, providers might be more likely to be a part of the subsidy

system, which helps to stabilize the supply. These kinds of investments might also draw providers in to locations or types of care where demand is higher than supply.

Community partnerships. Children have a wide variety of developmental needs, and one way to improve the quality of a child care setting is to create a strategy that addresses all of them. Building community partnerships and accessing local community or neighborhood-based hubs can add a new network of support for children, families, and child care providers.

All families, including those who live in rural areas or who work non-traditional hours, deserve to have access to affordable, high-quality child care. We want all families across the country to know that addressing and alleviating shortages of quality child care is one of this administration's highest priorities. I'm excited about the new focus and about the opportunities the CCDBG Act of 2014 has given us. I can't wait to see all of the ways we're able to change the child care landscape for the better. ■

REGION ONE



Beyond the child: engaging parents in your child care program

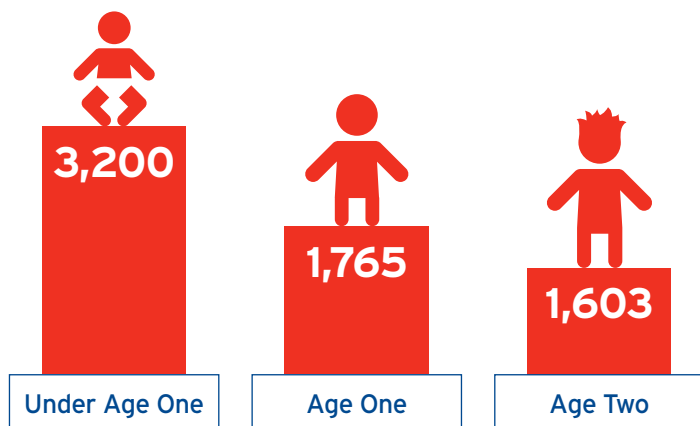
In early childhood, we focus much of our work on the children in care. Children are the reason that we do the job that we do, every day. A major component to making changes in children's lives is including the family. In our work with providers, we challenge them to build a partnership and make the family just as much a part of the program as the children are.

In the last year we worked with a provider who had a quality program and a passion to improve her interactions with parents. She attended our Strengthening Families trainings and learned about different ways to engage families. She received one-on-one coaching from a specialist to help her develop plans to involve families. She started greeting families as they came into the program instead of having them just drop off the child at the door. She began having consistent parent cafes where the parents and the provider could get together and discuss important topics and share information. The provider felt more empowered at the end of the year, and she had additional ways for the families to be involved in the program.



Child Care Referral Data

Child care referral requests for infant/toddler child care openings are in high demand



Child care referral requests for non-traditional shifts



Child Care Referrals (completed by the Child Care Aware® of Kansas Referral Center) January-September 2015



Child Care Assistance and Coming

Change

**By Hilary Gee,
Kansas Action for Children**

Families need safe, affordable child care, and providers need adequate payment to keep their child care businesses open. For many Kansas families, child care is too expensive. That's why states, including Kansas, offer child care assistance programs (sometimes called the child care subsidy).

Child care assistance is critical in enabling low-income adults to work so they can take care of their families. Without access to support such as child care assistance, poor and low-income parents often must choose between their jobs and the well-being of their children.

In order to afford infant care in an average Kansas child care center, a single mother earning the median

income level in Kansas would use nearly half of her paycheck. Families earning up to 185 percent of the poverty level — about \$3,000 a month for a family of three — are eligible for some help, but most are not receiving it.

Only 8 percent of the 211,000 Kansas children who are income-eligible to receive the child care subsidy are actually receiving assistance.

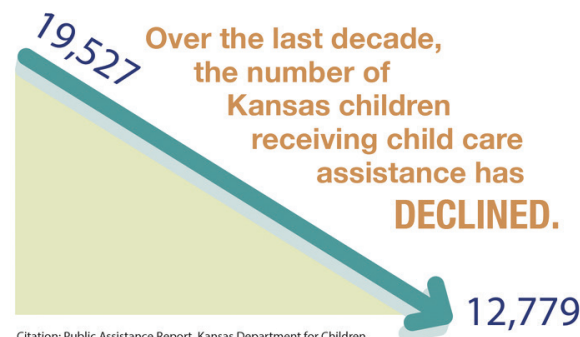
The number of children receiving child care assistance has declined significantly in the past 10 years. In 2015, the state's child care assistance program served an average of just 12,779 children each month — compared to more than 19,000 in 2006.

Although there continue to be many Kansas families struggling to make ends meet, administrative and legislative changes have made child care assistance inaccessible to the Kansas families who need it in order to find or maintain employment.

**FOR KANSAS FAMILIES,
THE PATH OUT OF POVERTY
STARTS WITH A JOB.
AND THE PATH TO A JOB
STARTS WITH
CHILD CARE.**



Child care assistance helps Kansas parents get back to work or enables them to go look for work. It is a critical step in helping low-income families get off welfare rolls, onto payrolls, and out of poverty.



Citation: Public Assistance Report, Kansas Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division. (Fiscal Year 2006 and Fiscal Year 2015).

Opportunities for

ge

Eligibility and enrollment policies for child care assistance, as well as other programs that help struggling Kansas families, have changed in recent years. Changes to these programs have made it difficult for the very families who most need child care assistance to get it. New requirements, such as more frequent reporting of changes in family circumstance and inflexible employment requirements, have made it difficult for families to keep child care assistance.

The low reimbursement level for providers also contributes to low participation in the program. Provider reimbursement rates in Kansas have not been increased since 2002, resulting in a growing disparity between private payment levels and child care assistance payment levels. The low reimbursement creates a challenge for providers facing increased costs, as well as for families

seeking care in an environment already short on providers, particularly for costly infant care. Some providers might decide that the time and effort required to accept assistance are not worth the low reimbursement they receive.

The good news is that there will soon be opportunities to make child care assistance work better for Kansas families and early care and education providers. Changes to the federal grant that supports various child care resources in the state, including the child care assistance program, require states to update to program policies.

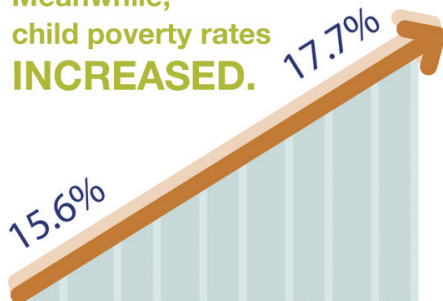
The voices and expertise of Kansas child care providers are critical to ensuring Kansas makes the most of this opportunity to improve its child care policies. Help make a difference — sign up for updates and alerts from Kansas Action for Children at www.kac.org/sign-up or contact us at: kac@kac.org or (785) 232-0550. ■

Today, only a **SMALL NUMBER** (8%) of eligible Kansas children receive child care assistance.



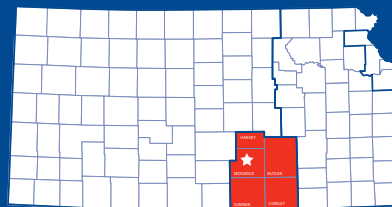
Citation: Analysis of data by KAC from U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2011–2013 data.

Meanwhile, child poverty rates **INCREASED.**



Citation: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year Estimates, 2006 and 2014.

REGION TWO



Design to Succeed: rearranging can reduce stress for you and benefit your kids

Did you know that classroom design can help improve children's behavior? A functioning environment, designed to meet the developmental needs of young children, helps make each day less stressful for your home and contributes to the success of all of your children, infant through preschool. Following the Design to Succeed training, we received an email from Kelli Black, the director of Basic Beginnings Preschool in Wichita.

"Good morning! A few of my girls attended your class last week and can't stop talking about what an amazing job you had done. After the New Year, I may insist all my staff attend the class. I was told that you come out and help set the rooms up for the appropriate ages. Would you be interested in coming to our school and working with us?"

Following the technical assistance and coaching visit at Basic Beginnings Preschool, our specialists received this email from Kellie:

"Oh my goodness... I LOVE you girls!!! The rooms look AMAZING! Thank you so much for coming out and helping!"



TOWN H

Community discussions into child care issues in

By Lori Steelman, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Answering the question “what is the need for child care in Kansas” is difficult and is dependent on a number of factors. Feedback received during 14 Town Hall meetings the KDHE Child Care Licensing Program held in early 2015 provided insight to some of the challenges parents face when searching for child care that best meets the needs of their family. At each of these meetings, parents, providers and community members were asked what challenges related to child care were common in their community. Responses were similar across the state and included: the shortage of infant/toddler care, high staff turnover, and the availability of face-to-face professional development opportunities.

Currently there are approximately 5,800 Kansas licensed child care facilities, including: licensed day care homes, group day care homes, child care centers, preschools, school-age programs, and drop-in programs for school-age children and youth. The combined total licensed capacity is just over 137,000. Based on the number of calls received at KDHE, there continues to be a great need for infant and toddler care. Parents searching for child care are directed to the referral services offered by Child Care Aware® of Kansas. Even with the expert assistance

of a referral counselor, finding infant care—especially home-based care—can be challenging. The license capacity for a day care home or group day care home is determined by the age of the youngest child in care and reduces the total number of children that may be cared for at any given time. Given the financial impact, it’s not uncommon for a home provider to take only older children, those no longer considered an infant (18 months of age or older). Infant units in child care centers require a 1 to 3 staff/infant ratio and have a maximum group size of 9 infants. Additionally many owners and program directors of child care centers are challenged with high staff turnover—directly impacting the ability to keep an infant and/or toddler room open and at capacity.

The town hall discussions also revealed concerns regarding the general public perception of a child care provider. Child care providers expressed the belief that they are not viewed as professionals worthy of wages that reflect the true cost of the services they provide. The inability to achieve a balance between the true cost of care and affordability for parents often leads to low wages or unfilled slots that are viewed as too costly. Child care is a business that places the responsibility of our most vulnerable population in the homes and facilities of licensed



LORI STEELMAN

Child Care Licensing
Program, Kansas
Department of Health
and Environment

Lori Steelman directs the Early Care & Youth Programs within the Child Care Licensing Program, Kansas Department of Health and Environment. She has worked with child care licensing for the state since 2010 and became the director for the program in 2012.

Previous related experience includes operating a home day care and contracting with Early Head Start and working with families that are deemed at risk through a non-profit under a Kansas CASA. She has Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Southwestern College, Winfield, KS and a CDA.



offer insight Kansas

professionals. The Kansas laws and regulations pertaining to the business of child care are intended to reduce the risk of harm by protecting the health, safety and welfare of children in out-of-home care settings. Licensed child care providers must maintain compliance with health and safety requirements including: supervision, staff/child ratios, group size, environmental and

barrier for an existing provider wanting to improve their skills. Based on feedback received during the town hall meetings—KDHE has made changes to the Child Care Licensing webpages and created a quarterly newsletter—making it easier for parents, providers and the public to obtain information and access to resources. In addition KDHE has convened the Child

Access to affordable professional development training opportunities impacts the availability and quality of child care in the community.

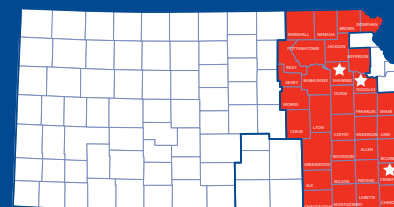
health, in addition to participating in initial and ongoing professional development. Providers are encouraged to discuss their ongoing compliance with regulations as well as their education and training achievements with potential and existing parents/families.

Another concern voiced across the state is the limited availability of face-to-face professional development opportunities at times and in locations convenient to providers. Access to affordable professional development training opportunities impacts the availability and quality of child care in the community. Limited access to training may be a barrier for a potential new provider, as an applicant cannot receive a license without having completed the foundational training requirements. This is also a

Care Licensing Systems Improvement Team, to provide advice and guidance on systems issues related to re-authorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), including health and safety requirements, availability and quality of child care that meets the needs of Kansas families, transparency in processes and statewide access to affordable professional development training opportunities.

Looking ahead to the next few years, there will be a number of new opportunities and challenges as Kansas works to build a comprehensive early childhood system that supports the healthy growth and development of young children and increases the availability of child care that meets the needs of Kansas working families. ■

REGION THREE



Developing partnerships gets helpful materials to providers and children

Region 3 continues to develop strong partnerships with local home visitation programs serving families in our region. One way we achieve this is by offering materials to partners that they can utilize and distribute, such as the *All About Me* calendars. The calendars include child development information specific to children ages 0-5. Feedback has been extremely positive, as the calendars contain lots of timely information that is helpful to families.

Home visitation partners and local health departments are supplied with coloring books to place in their waiting rooms where children gather. The coloring book, *Welcome to the Child Care Adventures of Alex*, describes activities that take place in the lives of two young children—Alex, who attends a child care program, and Kayla, who is cared for by her grandmother. Both children have learning activities and age-appropriate experiences. The back cover shares how families can access information helpful in locating and choosing child care.

We also distribute a bookmark as a tool that home visitation programs can use to recruit providers in communities where the supply of child care isn't meeting the demand from families. The bookmarks include contact information for our agency so we can offer support and assistance regarding how to become a licensed child care provider. When appropriate, partners are encouraged to share the bookmark with stay-at-home moms who might be interested in caring for one or two children in addition to their own.

Who will care for

With the demand of child care rising, communities are joining together to find creative ways to help families meet this important need. Child Care Aware® of Kansas - Region One has joined several communities to assist them with these discussions. Each community has approached the challenge of child care capacity differently. But, coming together has proven to be the key!

McPherson County

Economic Growth brings a need for additional child care; A Q&A with Anne Kirchner, Executive Director, United Way of McPherson County

1. How did your county/team determine that child care supply was a challenge for young families in your area?
Limited child care was on our radar due to the expansion of several local industries, which brought more families to McPherson County. The increase in jobs has caused concern regarding the availability of both child care and housing.
2. What were your beginning steps in addressing this community challenge?
We were forced to take action when a local daycare closed unexpectedly. Approximately 60 children were left without child care, and families were scrambling to find replacement child care. We participated in several community conversations to discuss the immediate and future needs. The mayor of McPherson hosted a meeting. There were many interested parties. An ad hoc committee was appointed to explore the situation in more detail and to provide guidance. United Way of McPherson County offered to be involved because education is a strong component of our overall mission. We also believe in collaborative community impact.
3. Who are your key community partners and how did you determine those agencies/people were important to include in meetings/discussions?
The first step included working

collaboratively with other interested parties, including United Way of McPherson County, the McPherson Chamber of Commerce, McPherson Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) and Unified School District 418. Leaders from all four organizations have a vested interest in helping identify quality, licensed daycare options. Quality child care and educational settings strengthen our community as generations move forward. United Way wants to ensure our community provides affordable, accessible and quality child care to ALL families. The Chamber of Commerce and MIDC work hand-in-hand to attract new employers and employees to the community. Being able to highlight quality, accessible daycare is an attractive recruitment tool. USD 418 supports quality daycare settings as a feeder system to the district's early childhood education program. Children who are nurtured well at a young age are more likely to succeed in academic and social settings.

4. How do you feel the discussions are going?
The ad hoc committee quickly established two surveys. One was distributed to HR departments throughout the business sector in McPherson County to determine child care needs from an employer's viewpoint. The second survey focused on families living and/or working in McPherson County to determine the types of child care needed. The surveys were available for a two-week period, and the ad hoc committee is scheduled to review the results in early December.
5. What are your biggest obstacles moving forward?
One obstacle includes convincing local industries that they need to get involved. With the recent industrial growth in the area, jobs are becoming more accessible. Employers must understand the importance of being a key player in providing child care options. Employees who are able to leave their children in a safe child care environment will be more productive at work.

6. What are your next steps?

The ad hoc committee will review the survey results. Preliminary results indicate there is a need for quality, licensed daycare for preschool age children and infants. The committee will discuss key players to include as we begin conversations regarding sponsors, managers, funders, etc. We have already benefited greatly from advice offered by Child Care Aware of Kansas through their work with other counties facing the same challenges. We will continue to rely on their expertise. We must explore all possibilities and open up conversations with churches, schools, parents, industries, businesses, non-profits and others. This is a community problem that must be solved with community input and action.

Edwards County

Sometimes communities realize there is a child care issue when it is pointed out in a meeting. Edwards County realized they had an issue in a meeting, which sparked several in the community to come together. They now have start-up grants for new child care providers.

Sheridan County

A hospital relies on its staff to operate but what happens when the staff can't come to work because they don't have child care?

One rural community in Western Kansas, Sheridan County, is working hard to figure this out! One of the largest employers in the community, the hospital, formed a committee to visit about the child care situation for their



our kids?

working parents. Child Care Aware® of Kansas - Region One joined one of these important meetings. The group visited about their options and the child care capacity in their town. We shared that Sheridan County has no listed child care openings. This means that families will not find a child care provider if they are new to the community and they may not have a choice for their children, causing further stress on the family. At the meeting, data was shared and the group was informed about the different child care license types. After some discussion the committee decided first to survey the hospital staff and see what the exact child care need really was.

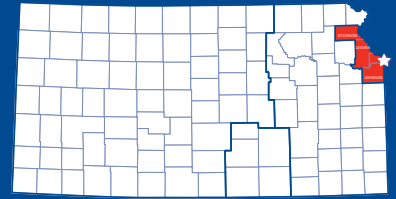
The committee then discussed the different options for opening up a child care facility,

depending on when a facility could be opened, and the amount of funding they would need available to support this new business. Child Care Aware® of Kansas Region One continues to be a resource for these community partners as they move forward with their mission to find creative solutions to meet the demand for child care in their small community.

Conclusion

A child care shortage is a community-based issue, not a family issue. When a family cannot find child care someone has to stay home from work, making this an economic challenge as well. This in return will affect the employer who has to fill the job opening of the employee who could not find child care to meet the needs of his/her family. ■

REGION FOUR



Shining the spotlight on poverty and opportunity

In June 2015, United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) invited The Family Conservancy President and CEO Dean Olson to share the Talk, Read, Play message with nearly 200 human service professionals at the 2015 Human Service Summit.

The message resonated with the attendees, many of whom work daily with children and families who are in unfortunate circumstances.

The summit focused on addressing rising poverty rates in Johnson County. According to a report released by UCS, the number of persons who are poor and near-poor in Johnson County has more than doubled since 2000. UCS has just completed a year of in-depth research to release a Framework for Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity. The framework includes three areas of focus, including "opportunities for healthy development and learning for all ages."

In October 2015, UCS hosted a screening of the signature *Hour of the Raising of America*, a documentary film that explores how a strong start for all children can lead to a healthier, safer, and more prosperous nation. After the screening a panel discussion included Katrina Ball, Child Care Aware of Eastern KS and Western MO Director, talking about resources available in Johnson County to support early learning and literacy development.

Through partnerships with organizations such as UCS, we are able to share our expertise about the early childhood field and share in the collective impact of reducing poverty and creating opportunity in our area.





ARE YOU MAKING THE MOST

REFLECTING ON 25 YEARS IN CHILD CARE

By Jeff Johnson

I recently retired after more than 25 years as a child care provider.

A quick bit of history: I spent 16 years with a large agency running a community center, child care center, and other youth programming. My wife was my assistant for most of that time. We burnt out, quit, and started a family child care program. Three years ago we decided that when all the kids currently in our care started school we would retire and pursue other endeavors in the early learning profession.

Over the past six months or so, I've spent a lot of time looking back on those 25 years and have some reflections to share...

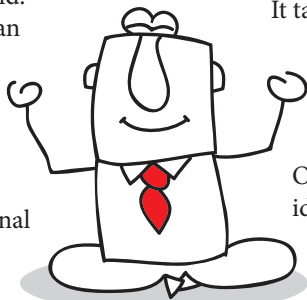
Focus On Emotional Environments

At its core, early learning is about humans connecting with other humans.

The physical environments we create for children are important, but not as important as the emotional environments we share with them. If children do not feel safe, secure, loved, connected, and valued, they have a hard time settling in to their physical space, relaxing, and taking learning risks.

In early learning settings, caregivers become emotional charging stations for the children in their care. This takes on many forms: comforting a fussing infant, lap-time for a stressed toddler, snuggling with an angry 3-year-old. This emotional labor can be draining and stressful, and leads to burnout.

Many caregivers do not pay enough attention to the emotional environments they create for kids, they are not mindful about the mindset they bring to their work.



Let The Bad Days Go

The stress, anger, frustration, fear, or whatever that messes up your day sticks around only as long as you allow it to.

I don't remember the details of many bad days as a caregiver. I don't even

remember exactly why I ended up quitting my job at that big agency. I know bad days existed, but I let the details go because there was no value in toting them around.

Letting go of the bad days can be tough for some people. They prefer carrying every uncomfortable, painful, agonizing moment with them. They take pride in their misery. They show off their discomfort.

This shows in their work. It affects the emotional environments they create. It taints their mindset.

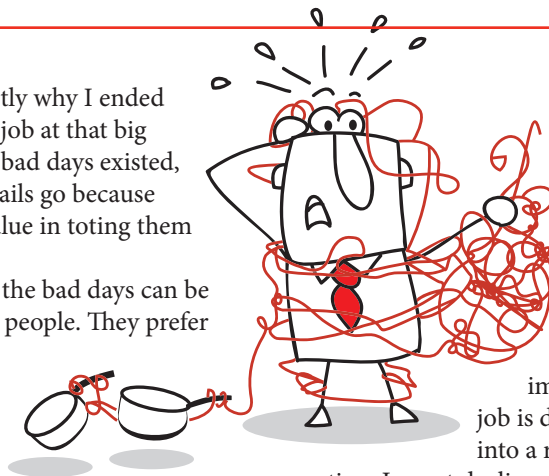
It takes effort, but letting go of the bad days can make you a better caregiver.

Be Here Now

The human mind likes to roam. Our consciousness flits from idea to idea, zips between past and future, toys with any bright shiny object that catches our attention. (Try not thinking about a squirrel wearing a pink hat and riding a tiny jet-powered unicycle.)

This makes it very difficult to stay in the present. Our minds flit from one idea to the next; we think about dinner plans, we worry about arguments with our own children, and we get distracted by smartphone apps.

Working with kids, however, requires



that we be here now — in the moment, tuned-in, focused, and ready to respond mindfully to their actions and needs.

Over the years, I've realized the most important part of my job is done before I walk into a room of children. The

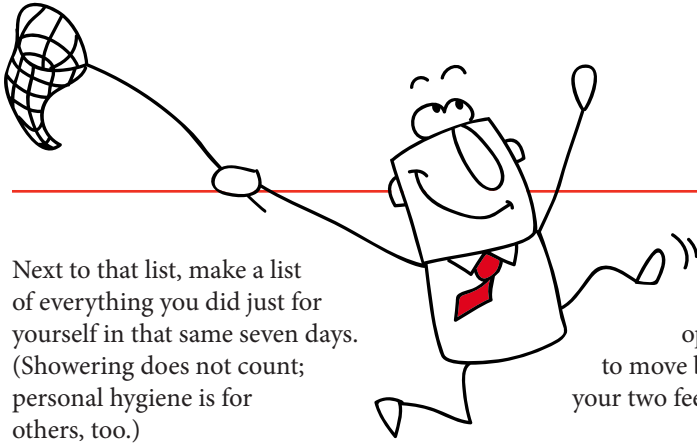
time I spent dealing with my own needs, addressing the things that grabbed at my attention, and managing my stress not only made me a happier person, it made me a better caregiver.

Attend To Your Needs

It's a lot easier to be here now when you regularly put some effort into meeting your own needs. The problem is that while people in this profession tend to be good at anticipating and meeting the needs of others, they are horrible at doing the same for themselves. Most caregivers habitually burn calories all day long meeting the needs of other people and then have no time or energy left to meet their own needs. This used to be me. It led me to quit a job I dearly loved and leave a program I literally gave my blood, sweat, and tears to.

Stop reading for a few minutes and make a list of everything you have done for other people in the last seven days. List it all, every nose or butt you wiped, every dish you washed, every bit of advice you gave.

OF YOUR DASH?



Next to that list, make a list of everything you did just for yourself in that same seven days. (Showering does not count; personal hygiene is for others, too.)

What you probably found is that you do a lot more for others than yourself. Some of you might have found that you did nothing for yourself in the past week.

So make a change.

Start by listing your needs. What do you need from life that you're not getting? Don't be shy, write it all down. You don't have to share it with anyone. Next, commit to spending at least 5-10 minutes every day working to meet the needs you listed. You're worth a few minutes every day, aren't you?

What you'll find if you actually do this is that life will get easier. You'll be less stressed and more focused. The bumps in your day will be less jarring. The moments of focus and calm will be more frequent.

Obey The Law Of Two Feet

The law of two feet: If you find yourself in a situation where you do not feel as if you are learning, contributing, valued, or appreciated, you should use your two feet and go someplace else.

Sometimes, this is a hard law to follow, but the payoffs are worth the effort.

A lot of early learning professionals get stuck in jobs, relationships, committees, funding streams, curriculums, philosophies, and routines that just do not work for them. Instead of choosing to move on, they choose to stay stuck. It's easier.

Change can be a snarling monster lurking in the shadows. The fear, uncertainty, and uneasiness that come with change can be paralyzing.

But change can also be a fresh

start down a path to exciting new opportunities. The key is to move beyond the fear and put your two feet in motion.

Live Your Dash

I hate to be the one to break it to you, but someday you're going to die. We don't like to think about it, but it's the one thing we can't avoid. Eventually you'll breathe your last breath and there will be a hunk of stone, a brass plaque, a newspaper obituary, or a Facebook post with the year you were born and the year you died. Those dates will be separated by a tiny dash. That dash represents the whole of your life: every smile, tear, action, reaction, interaction, hug, kiss, hope, dream, fear, struggle, success, failure, and accomplishment.

Are you making the most of your dash? Are you living life fully? Or are you just going through the motions, letting life happen to you?

I spent too many years going through the motions, kind of feeling stuck in my own life. Then the untimely death of a friend and mentor brought clarity. I decided to take action, to make the most of my dash.

This quote, attributed to Mark Twain, sums up my live-your-dash mindset:

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

Know You Make A Difference

Over 25 years, I gave time, attention, and energy to lots of kids, and on the whole I think I made a difference. You have, too. The problem is that in this

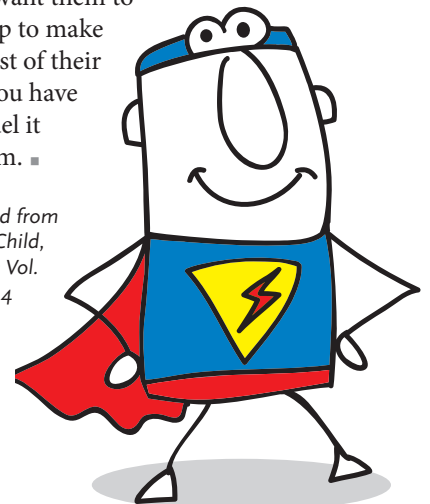
profession we do not always see the payoff for our hard work. Kids move on to live their own dashes. They sail away from the safe harbor of childhood.

If you work in a factory, at the end of the day you see a stack of shiny new widgets at the end of the assembly line. You see a payoff for your efforts. In early learning, kids move on before we get to see the finished product. The best we get with most kids is glimpses of who they will become as they leave our programs, or maybe occasional updates via social media on what's happening in their lives.

While you might not see the end result of your work, know that you're making a difference. You are an important part of their world while their brains are making connections that will serve them through all the years to follow. The hours kids spend in your care are part of the foundation upon which their lives are built.

That's why focusing on emotional environments, letting go of bad days, being here now, meeting your own needs, obeying the law of two feet, and living your dash matter so much — they put you in a better mental place to do your work. You're a professional role model. Kids learn more from your actions than from your words. If you want them to grow up to make the most of their lives, you have to model it for them. ■

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12 Issue 4



“Not only does high-quality early childhood education make a difference for children, it matters to their employed parents. Employers increasingly find that the availability of good early childhood programs is critical to the recruitment and retention of parent employees.”

Why America Needs High-Quality Early Childhood Education (The Business Roundtable and Corporate Voices for Working Families)

Parent-Friendly POLICIES

What employers can do to keep valuable staff and support child care

By www.readynation.org

When you think about employee retention, you might think about high salaries and a lucrative benefit package, but have you ever thought of flexibility as a retention strategy? Have you considered the option for parents to attend their child's school play during the middle of the workday or to attend a school field trip for some one-on-one, quality time with their child?

Parent-friendly policies don't have to cost a company lots of profit. Small changes can let parents know that you care, and increasing flexibility will undoubtedly increase moral and loyalty.

Working parents need stable, nurturing, quality child care for young children. Good child care relationships translate to benefits for all — parents, businesses, children, and child care providers.

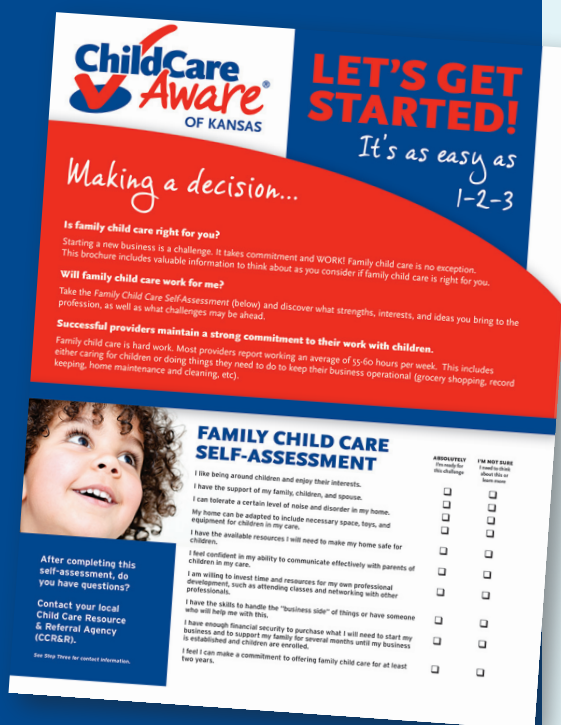
Parents juggle busy schedules trying to balance work and caring for their children. Throw in the fast-paced lifestyle we lead today, and you have a recipe for challenges, especially when it comes to child care. When parents know their child is being cared for in a safe and secure setting they are far more productive at work. Unstable child care leads to absenteeism and tardiness and causes additional stress for all. The average working parent in America annually misses five to nine days of work, or one to two weeks, because of child care problems. The cost to U.S. businesses is \$3 billion annually¹.

Businesses can help

Parent-friendly personnel policies can result in businesses being able to retain workers who might otherwise not be able to stay employed when child care issues arise. Providing support to parents in the workforce who have young children leads to better retention of good workers. It also supports childcare providers, and that offers an additional economic benefit to communities. According to ReadyNation.org: “Child care and preschool professionals generally spend most of their earnings locally. States realize roughly \$2 in local spending for each child care dollar spent.”¹

The availability of quality child care also offers long-term benefits to businesses. Businesses need qualified workers to fill jobs. Children enrolled in a good early education program in the first five years of life are most likely to be ready for school, and to hold a highly skilled job or be enrolled in college by age 21. Averaged results from 123 different studies across four decades of early education research found that by third grade, about a third of the achievement gap can be closed by

Continued on page 23



Child Care Aware® of Kansas has developed an informative resource to help new family child care businesses! Check out this comprehensive brochure for a self assessment, effective business strategies, regulatory information, and a checklist of essentials.

For more tips, assistance and ideas contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R), go to www.ks.childcareaware.org



Many parents don't know where to begin when it comes time to find child care. Businesses can access Child Care Aware® of Kansas informational resources for breakroom bulletin boards, the company intranet, or for use as paycheck stuffers. Share the *10 Questions to Ask* brochure for new parents, or for parents who already have a great child care provider, share the *Growth Chart* to help them gain knowledge about basic child development milestones.

ABCs to a Family-Friendly Workplace

Allow Flexible Leave Policies

- Arrange leave policies by the hour rather than by the day.
- Combine sick and vacation time to allow parents flexibility in use of accrued leave.
- Allow employees returning from maternity/paternity leave a gradual transition back to their regular work schedule.

Build Flexible Schedules

- Flextime: The employee is at the workplace during specific "core" hours; all other hours are flexibly scheduled.
- Compressed work week: The equivalent of a full week is worked in fewer than five full workdays or, for employees on biweekly schedules, the equivalent of two weeks is worked in fewer than 10 full workdays.
- Telecommuting: Employees work out of their homes or at a satellite worksite instead of in the office.

Communicate Child Care Resources

- Parent Seminars/Employee Fairs: Provide lunch-hour seminars on parenting topics, such as choosing quality child care, time management for working parents, managing challenging behavior, and school readiness. Include the local child care resource and referral agency at employee health/resource fairs to provide materials.
- Child Care Referrals: Distribute information on child care services from the local child care resource and referral agency and contract with the agency regarding enhanced referral services.
- Parent Resources: Subscribe to working parent magazines and/or parent newsletters for interested employees. Provide a list of community services and websites for parents.

Source: San Diego County Child Care and Development Planning Council
www.crs.ymca.org/lib-local/assets/Documents/ABCs_brochure.pdf



Sharing Our Stories

PARENT

The Challenge of Daycare for Toddler Twins

By Angela Sutton, Parent

When we found out we were having twins, we made the decision that I would stay home for the first year to care for them. It was an amazing experience to be able to do that. At 10 months of age, we decided the girls would benefit from participating in some type of daycare program either home-based or a center. We began what was an exhaustive search. The girls were children numbers four and five for us. We had not had daycare challenges with our other children and enjoyed having them in home-based care.

Two open spots for infants under 18 months old were nonexistent. It was actually like asking a home-based daycare to give up four spots. Finding a provider that was willing to take on year-old twins also presented a challenge. Where we did find two available spots, the provider was honest enough to say she was not interested in the challenges that same-age children can present.

We'd basically given up when a local center called to say they had space. We were thrilled. The care they received at this center for 14 months was amazing, albeit expensive. Unfortunately, the center closes for three separate week-long timeframes each year. My husband and I do not have that much vacation time available so we found ourselves once again searching for two open spots.

For some of the interviews with home-based daycares we drove right on past when we arrived for our appointments. Overgrown grass, foot-tall weeds, inoperable vehicles and a plethora of toys scattered outside the fence were not appealing. The search became a very emotional experience. Eventually, we were lucky enough to get two spots in another center. Knowing that our toddler twins will be well cared for is comforting. But I would be happy to not have to go through the experience ever again of searching for a quality setting for my children.

PARENT

Understanding the Emotional Toll

By Ann Marie Morris, Parent

Before my first child was born, I always assumed that I would find and use a quality child care center. But when it came down to it, I found it was too hard to leave my tiny baby in the care of anyone outside of family. My mother-in-law took care of my daughter for the first year, and even that was hard. Then she went back to work.

When we found we were on a long wait list at a local child care center, we had to look at home providers. The first was open for only five months. The second was OK, but closed often for a variety of reasons. She finally closed her daycare when I was pregnant with my son.

I went to the Child Care Referral Center to find our present provider. We have been very impressed by the quality of care. My son has been in her care since he was 7 weeks old, and I can tell he is excited to see her every day. My daughter, now 3, loves her too — it was a hard decision to move her to an all-day preschool.

I was grateful for the free referral center, especially since they seemed to understand the emotional toll that goes along with finding someone to take care of your children. After all, our child care provider is helping to raise our children while we work to provide for them.

PARTNER

A No-Win Situation

By Kelly Mobray, Community Partner

Kansas is in great need of child care that supports parents working night or weekend shifts. At the adult education center where I work, we consistently see our students face issues with child care that may impede their education and employment. Recently, a single mom working on her education was faced with a tough decision when her young daughter became ill. Having no support, this woman had to choose between staying home with her ill daughter or going to work. She did not want to face an absence penalty. This is a no-win situation — having to choose between caring for your child and keeping your employment to support that child.

Personal accounts of the search to find and provide quality child care

PARENT

My Child Care Experience

By Kelsey Sims, Parent

I am a working mom, not by choice but by necessity. My daughter is 2 years old, and this has been my first experience with child care providers.

We are blessed and thankful for the provider we have. She is affordable and takes care of my child as if she were her own. But it has taken two other uncomfortable situations to get to her, and as a mother it makes me cringe.

When we announced we were pregnant, the first piece of advice from most “pro” mommies was to start looking for daycare. Well, that was the furthest thing from my mind; I wanted to enjoy the moment.

As time closed in on me and it was time to start looking, I had no idea where to begin, what questions to ask, what the rules and regulations were for the state of Kansas, or what was acceptable or not for providers. I had taken parenting classes, and we discussed many things, including pregnancy, car seats, breastfeeding and caring for your child. Not once did we discuss child care. We should have. For goodness sakes, we are leaving the most precious person in our lives with a complete stranger.

I learned about the Child Care Aware office because I had a friend who knew about that resource. I have since used many of the options for help, including the referral hotline and the website.

I now know that when you meet with a child care provider you are conducting a job interview. Think about it — how many times do you walk in for an interview, get asked nothing and expect to get the job? Essentially, the provider is working for you. You are leaving the love of your life with her all day. You have the right as a mother/parent to ask questions and make sure that provider is a good fit for you and your child.

I was that parent — the one that would drop in unannounced every once in a while. As a parent you have that right and should not feel bad about it. That is your child/children and no one should dictate to you the times you can and can't see them. If the provider does not like drop-ins, then just keep looking.

PROVIDER

The Difference between Good Care and Great Care

By Kathi Barton, Family Child Care Provider

Family child care providers have a unique opportunity to build family partnerships in a way no other facility can. I have worked in a child care facility in the past; the centers I worked at were both wonderful places with caring teachers who were very focused on trying to meet each child's individual needs. However, I have spent 22 years as a licensed child care provider, and as I grew and gained more knowledge over the years through Child Care Aware of Kansas programs, I became aware of the connection that is developed between parents and home providers that is not possible in bigger atmospheres.

A child will always look to his parents for the “okay” that somebody is a safe person to be with. This is why it is KEY for parents and providers to bond and develop a partnership. This allows a true relationship to build between parent and provider and between child and provider. Children can sense discord in a relationship, so it is vital to work together toward the common goal — the best interests of the child.

Another thing that I have learned is that relationships between parent and provider are not one-sided, but reciprocal. Years ago, I felt that only I needed to give, but I have found over the years that parents want to be included and want to help with projects that involve their children and the things that will affect them when in my care.

Several years ago I received a grant that enabled me to purchase six tons of rubber mulch. I had three parents that spent countless hours helping me get the mulch from my driveway to my playground. I also have a parent who is a wonderful carpenter. He made a very sturdy wooden gate for my kitchen that keeps the children safe from kitchen hazards, and will hold up for many years to come. Yet another parent comes in weekly to do maintenance on my fish tank on his own free time.

These things have made a big difference in our child care. That in and of itself is the key: it is OUR child care, not mine. We work as a unit for the good of the kids. Family partnerships can have many different appearances. The important thing is this: that you develop those relationships! They make the difference between good care and GREAT care!

CONNECTING

Reaching out, making connections, growing your business

Do you have business and professional goals? Are you interested in growing your child care program, learning about community resources and better supporting your families? The Child Care Aware Training Academy™ can help.

The Child Care Aware Training Academy™ is



an easy-to-use online program, designed specifically for anyone who works with or cares for young children. The Training Academy offers a variety of online courses to meet your educational needs. Every course earns CEU credit at no additional cost and meets Kansas Department of Health and Environment in-service hour requirements.

Marketing and Recruiting

How do you ensure families in your community know about your child care program? Marketing and recruiting, an important part of managing and growing your child care business, are a continuous and ongoing process. Learn what a provider can do to reach parents who are looking for a child care program. This course will discuss:

- How to make parents and the community aware of your family child care program
- The components of a marketing plan and calendar
- The necessary decisions and how to make them before starting a marketing initiative
- Free and inexpensive ways to advertise a family child care program
- Approaches to marketing a family child care program that require financial resources
- Guidelines to follow in handling telephone inquiries
- How to establish and maintain relationships with parents for marketing purposes

Community Organizations

In most communities, there are a variety of organizations and agencies that can provide support to child care providers and the families you serve. These include

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), schools, libraries, emergency medical services, the health department, cooperative extension services, community colleges, churches, hospitals and the Department of Social Services. This course will explain:

- The services offered by Child Care Resource and Referral agencies
- The benefits of collaborating with school personnel
- How to identify the services provided by community and public libraries, emergency management, health department, the Department for Children and Families and other community organizations

Professional Organizations and Affiliations

There are many benefits both to family child care providers and communities when providers belong to and participate in early care and education professional organizations, support groups and networks. In addition, it is important for you as a provider to know what local, state and national organizations are available so you can become familiar with and access their resources.

By building a strong support system through involvement with other professionals, you improve the quality of child care you offer to families. Your community also benefits by your involvement as you share your knowledge and expertise with others. Additionally, becoming credentialed by the Council for Professional Recognition and accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care will increase your professionalism and demonstrate your commitment to providing safe, quality child care to the families in your community. Participants will learn about:

- Provider support groups and the benefits of belonging to a support group
- Why it is important for a family child provider to have a support network
- The benefits of participating in a professional organization
- How to identify professional organizations

and agencies specializing in early care and education

- The services offered by the National Association for Family Child Care and other organizations
- Earning the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and the benefits of becoming a nationally accredited family child care provider

Planning and Conducting Open Houses

Open houses are a great way to introduce your child care program to parents, teachers and administrators. This course explains:

- The purpose and benefits of open houses
- Provides strategies and ideas for scheduling and planning a successful open house
- Potential times for scheduling open houses
- Themes and activities that enhance open houses

Helping Families Find and Use Resources

Families are not always aware of the community resources that are available to them. As a knowledgeable early childhood professional, you can help families of the children in your family child care program by helping them find and use resources. Resources available to families in your community may include child care subsidies, federal and state tax credits, and community aid organizations. The course will:

- Identify state and federal child care tax credit programs
- Explain the purpose of the child care subsidy program and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program
- Discuss how the School Lunch Program helps families
- List examples of local community organizations and of local mental health resources that may be available to assist families

For more information, visit us on the web at www.ks.childcareaware.org or call 1-855-750-3343. ■

Hot Off the Press

Check out these
children's books by
Kansas authors

Alice Eberhart-Wright, Family Therapist
and Child Development Specialist



Nearly everyone I meet as an adult lights up when I ask if they remember a favorite book from childhood. Mothers, fathers, teachers, grandparents, and older siblings all

have passed on the legacy of books to the next generation. They retell the stories or drag out dog-eared copies of their favorites. And some have now turned to writing, illustrating, and self-publishing new books.

These Book Nook selections invite you to take a leap into trying some books that reflect the talent of local writers and illustrators. They are written in few enough words that even very young children will like them. In turn, they should inspire older children and adult readers to consider the joys that can come from turning on your own creativity.

The Fish's Wishes

Written by Glendyn Buckley and illustrated by Barbara Waterman-Peters, *The Fish's Wishes* is an

absolute delight. Barbara is one of Kansas's best known artists, and Glendyn has been an educator for more than 40 years. This is their first published book together.

In it, an unhappy little fish swims in its small pond while it dreams of an open sea and wishes for a body that flashes silver and gold. (It looks like the bluegill that I got to know well as a child fishing in my relatives' farm ponds.) This fish doesn't have to be caught on a hook to get out of the pond. Instead, it hears a voice granting it one wish. Using its wish, the little fish is thrust into a magical big ocean and given a new sparkly body.

Now we all know that wishes for bigger and better things are seldom all they are cracked up to be. The ocean is scary and huge, with a shark swimming by.

My favorite thing about the story is its amazing ending. "With a twist of his tail and a thrust of his fin, the world of tomorrow welcomed him in. Flashing silver, glittering gold, the end of the story is yet to be told."

So, what happened? That question is what makes this book so wonderful for adults to

use with children. I have asked everyone from small children to adults. Two 7- and 8-year-old girls said without hesitation that the fish would go back to its pond. One of my adult grandsons said he would have to think about it. His wife said that the fish would ask other creatures in the ocean what it should do.

A well-known painter, Barbara uses water color to create a beautiful ocean environment for the little fish. I would love to give children watercolors and see how they are inspired by the illustrations. They could continue the story almost like a chapter book with the fish's adventures continuing indefinitely.

The Fish's Wishes is a relationship book where we can learn about the inner workings of a child's mind, if we take the time to listen and allow the child to write his or her own ending. To order it, write gendyn@att.net / barbara.peters@att.net.

Dog Tales

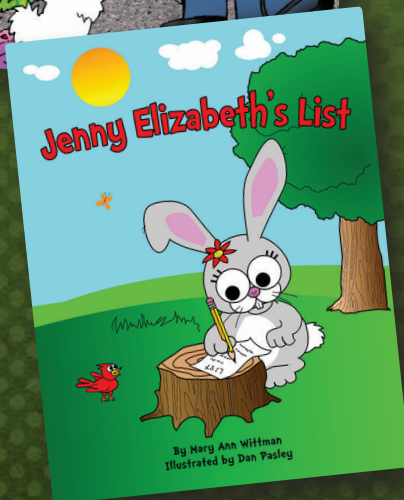
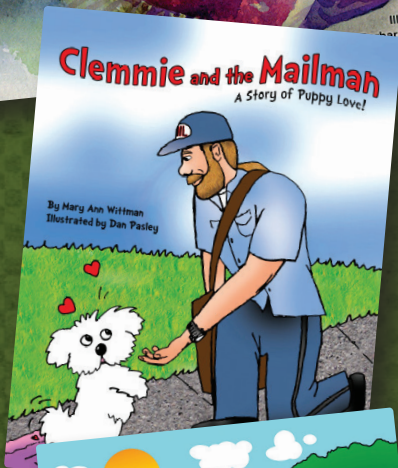
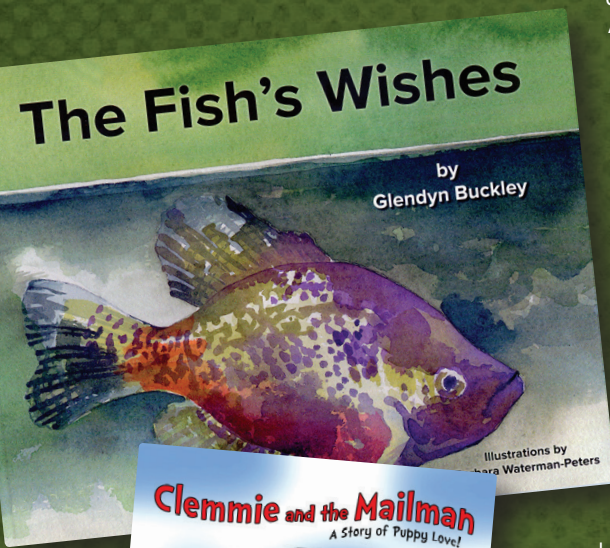
Next, I want to introduce you to Mary Ann Wittman's books, illustrated by Dan Pasley. We are a dog- and pet-loving culture. Mary Ann put her passion for her little tan-and-white dogs into stories that celebrate the individuality of each pet. Each of the three books is based on the adventures of an honored dog.

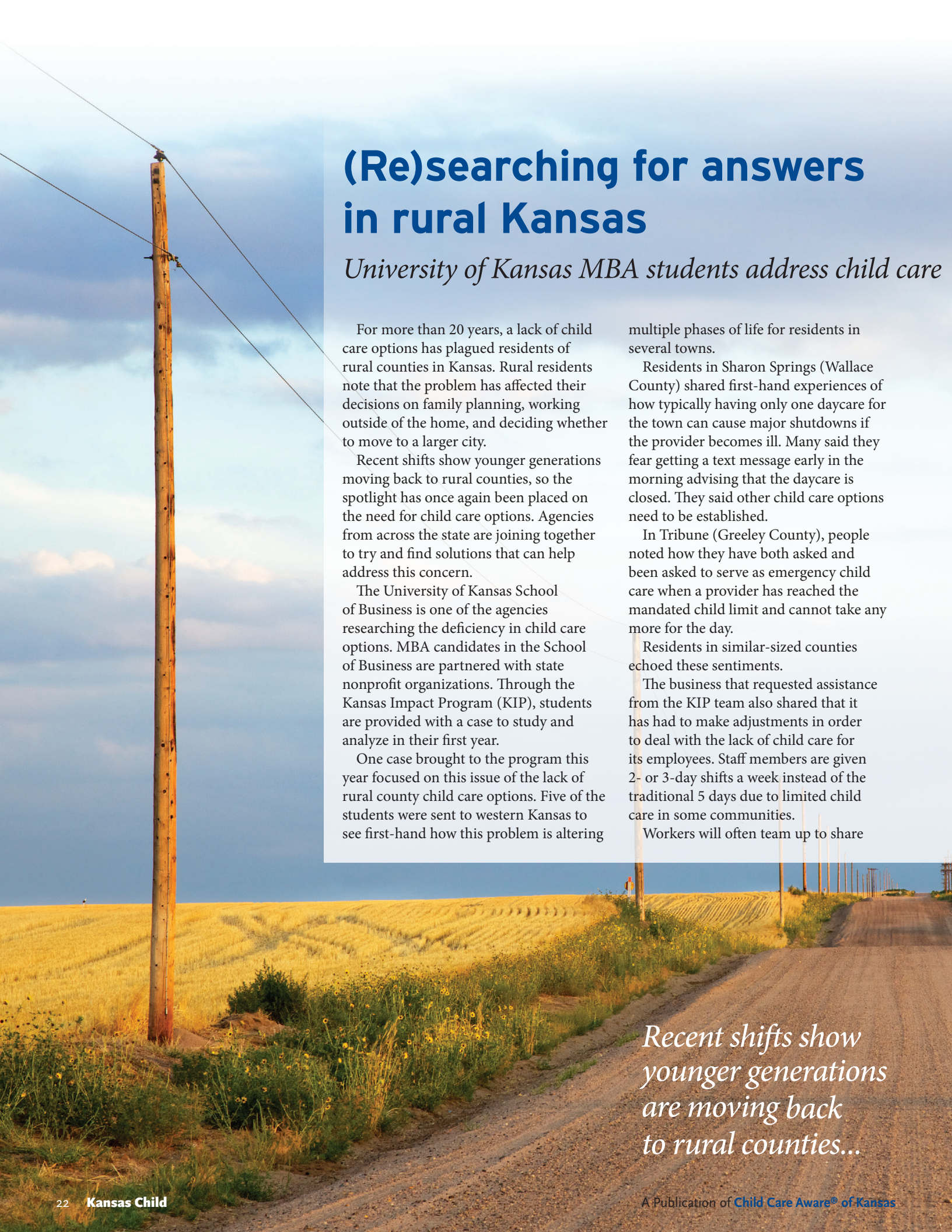
My great-grandson, 3-year-old, plane-loving Brayden, liked *Scooter and the Jet Plane*, a story about the little dog who experienced international travel. I particularly liked *Clemmie and the Mailman* because it focuses on love and kindness for little creatures in a scary world. I also loved *Muffy and the Big Pink Ball*, because it deals with conquering irrational fears.

Dan has created charming childlike colorful illustrations for each story, and we can see photographs of the real dogs at the end of the books.

Also watch for Mary Ann's new book, *Jenny Elizabeth's List*, that focuses on some of the values we want children to grow up with. In it, Jenny Elizabeth decides to make a list of the ways she can help others be happy along their journey of life. The book invites the readers to make their own list.

To order Mary Ann's books, visit: <http://dogtales.wix.com/dogtales>.





(Re)searching for answers in rural Kansas

University of Kansas MBA students address child care

For more than 20 years, a lack of child care options has plagued residents of rural counties in Kansas. Rural residents note that the problem has affected their decisions on family planning, working outside of the home, and deciding whether to move to a larger city.

Recent shifts show younger generations moving back to rural counties, so the spotlight has once again been placed on the need for child care options. Agencies from across the state are joining together to try and find solutions that can help address this concern.

The University of Kansas School of Business is one of the agencies researching the deficiency in child care options. MBA candidates in the School of Business are partnered with state nonprofit organizations. Through the Kansas Impact Program (KIP), students are provided with a case to study and analyze in their first year.

One case brought to the program this year focused on this issue of the lack of rural county child care options. Five of the students were sent to western Kansas to see first-hand how this problem is altering

multiple phases of life for residents in several towns.

Residents in Sharon Springs (Wallace County) shared first-hand experiences of how typically having only one daycare for the town can cause major shutdowns if the provider becomes ill. Many said they fear getting a text message early in the morning advising that the daycare is closed. They said other child care options need to be established.

In Tribune (Greeley County), people noted how they have both asked and been asked to serve as emergency child care when a provider has reached the mandated child limit and cannot take any more for the day.

Residents in similar-sized counties echoed these sentiments.

The business that requested assistance from the KIP team also shared that it has had to make adjustments in order to deal with the lack of child care for its employees. Staff members are given 2- or 3-day shifts a week instead of the traditional 5 days due to limited child care in some communities.

Workers will often team up to share

*Recent shifts show
younger generations
are moving back
to rural counties...*

issues in Western Kansas

a provider's open slot and adjust their work schedules to match. The lack of options also results in employees leaving the workforce due to the hassle of finding consistent child care. The risk of losing highly qualified workers is what prompted the business to seek the university's guidance in finding solutions.

Phase one of the analysis is already underway. Soon more than 1,500 surveys will be sent to residents in multiple counties. Rural child care providers will be contacted to gather information about the struggles that come with operating in-home child care facilities. Once the surveys are returned, an in-depth report of the findings will be made available. The hope is for a better understanding of options and potential solutions. Additionally, the team has reached out to Child Care Aware to better understand how it works to help providers and families find solutions to this problem.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that those who enjoy living in rural Kansas will no longer have to worry about finding quality child care. ■

Continued from page 16

providing early education.¹

Investments in high-quality, early childhood programs yield short- and long-term returns to businesses and the economy¹. Parents, advocates and researchers all agree that what is right and what we know align. When communities focus on ensuring ALL children have a strong start, we ALL benefit.

For additional information, check out www.readynation.org.

Creative, Easy-to-Start Strategies

Parents whose child care needs are not met are more likely to have higher absenteeism and tardiness issues, both issues ultimately impact company productivity. Check out our website at www.ks.childcareaware.org for resources that help parents find reliable, high-quality child care - saving them hours of lost energy trying to figure out where to start their search!

Here are a few of strategies to help employers:

- Organize seminars on choosing child care, what makes a quality program, and effective parenting.
- Adopt employees' child care programs and donate repairs and consumable materials.
- Organize child development consultant services (your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R) is a great resource) by phone or on-site.

Resources available from Child Care Aware® of Kansas

- Kansas Child – a magazine designed to provide up-to-date information to parents, child care providers and businesses
- Profitable Strategies – reviews ways to support employees with children
- Looking for Child Care – display this poster in your break room to get the word out to parents about finding quality child care
- Palm card and insert – wallet-size cards and a note that provides information for parents on finding care

Contact us at info@ks.childcareaware.org for more ideas and materials. ■

Source: 1 www.readynation.org/wp-content/uploads/ReadyNation-Early-Learning-Overview-092415.pdf





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25 YEARS!

Child Care Aware® of Kansas is celebrating 25 years! Our goal is to bring more awareness around the state to the good work of Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&Rs) Agencies that provide services in all 105 Kansas counties! They support families, who are consumers of early childhood services, and those who invest in the early childhood workforce, to ensure high-quality child care is available. They also share information and data with communities to increase awareness about the challenges and rewards of the early childhood field.

Checkout our website for more information, www.ks.childcareaware.org

