

vision & plan



NORTHEAST IOWA CHILD DEVELOPMENT & DISCOVERY CENTER

Vision: Winneshiek County has state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor child development and play areas that encourage learning through high quality care, creative design, shared services, and innovative STEAM learning spaces. As a result, children of all ages flourish, families move to Northeast Iowa, child care and development businesses are sustainable, our school enrollment is increasing rather than decreasing, our workforce has high quality child care, and our communities thrive.

Mission: Bring together private and public partners to overcome child care challenges, shortages, and obstacles with forward thinking, dynamic solutions that maximize child development, learning, and play options throughout the county and serve as a model for other rural child care and development providers across the nation.

Urgency: Recognize that even though we will find solutions for all child care providers and businesses, small and medium in-home child care businesses and afterschool programs, as well as larger child development centers, we MUST address the most URGENT needs first. Sunflower Child Development Center, our largest child care center (120 children) and one of the few that provides infant care, is at a critical point and in danger of closure. We must immediately help construct a new state-of-the-art facility to serve children from throughout the county.

Smart Planning: Utilize public and private expertise to create and implement a new business model that uses creative design, alternative energy, and innovative management to transform child care and development for children, child care providers, and businesses slots available to our workforce.

Work with Sunflower Board of Directors and Partners to **Raise Funds for, Design, and Construct a State-of-the-Art Child Development and Discovery Center that will:**

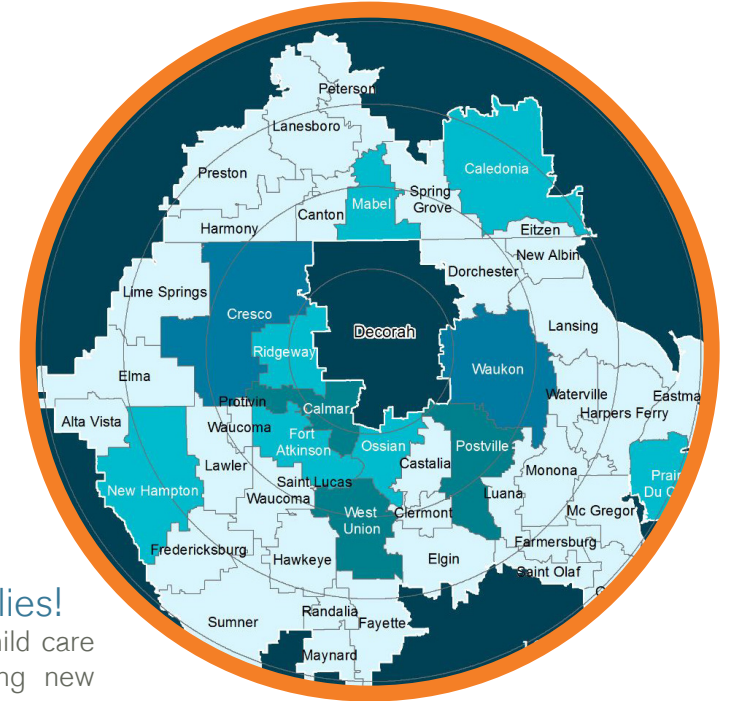
- » Prevent the loss of 120 child care slots.
- » Create and provide safe, unique, and age-appropriate child care and development spaces for children from 6 weeks to 12 years.
- » Provide child care for 214 children, with room to expand to 308 children and shared learning and play spaces for children from throughout the region.
- » Increase facility income and sustainability and maximize benefits for the larger community through innovative building design and business management.
- » Incorporate and share indoor play and learning spaces at the facility as a "Discovery Center". Non-classroom spaces to be shared with other child care businesses, homeschoolers, and the public (for a fee during designated hours).
- » Provide creative indoor and outdoor learning spaces and playground areas that promote learning and healthy active living, including STEAM play and learning spaces. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math.)
- » Incorporate sustainable energy, smart building design, and innovative landscaping (100KW Solar, Geothermal system, passive solar, bioswales).
- » Pay competitive wages and provide benefits.
- » Provide training and career advancement opportunities for employees, as well as new and existing child care providers from throughout the county and the region.
- » Hold conversations with other Winneshiek County child care and development centers and businesses to identify new opportunities to realize the mission.

our workforce needs child care.



OUR WORKFORCE NEEDS CHILD CARE

Decorah, population 7,600, is the largest community in our seven-county region. Workforce studies confirm that businesses in Decorah and Winneshiek County hire employees from Winneshiek County and five nearby counties (2018 - Iowa Workforce Development). Unemployment in this region is low, even during COVID-19 (4.9% in Winneshiek County) and a greater portion of the population is over 65 (21%) than in Iowa (17%) further reducing the available workforce. **Unfortunately, there are also several "Child Care Deserts" in our region** where the number of children compared to the number of available child care slots is over 3:1 and as much as 9:1. That means that in some areas there are nine children for every one child care slot. Families report being on child care waiting lists for months or even years.



Who needs child care most? Working families!

As a result of low overall workforce numbers and the child care shortage, our businesses are having difficulty recruiting new employees.

Child care is a community AND workforce issue that is not going away unless we do something about it.

It is increasingly difficult for our employers to recruit skilled workers between 20 and 45 years of age. As a result, our businesses are struggling to fill job vacancies. It is also difficult to recruit new businesses to the area. Because we can not provide child care for employees, our population is declining, schools are consolidating or closing, some businesses have shortened hours or days, other businesses can not expand. Consider that in **Winneshiek County alone 80 child care slots were lost within the last two years**. When recruiting employees, Winneshiek County businesses promote housing, community infrastructure, natural and recreational resources, vibrant downtowns, and other amenities. Even when attracted by the promise of a job and all the local amenities, workers with children find it difficult to move into the region because they can not find child care.

Communities across rural America are holding listening sessions to figure out how to attract employees between 20 and 45 years of age. **These employees have the power to revitalize small towns**, not only by providing a workforce for existing businesses and starting up their own businesses, but also by increasing school enrollment, buying homes, spending money on disposable purchases, and infusing energy into community projects. Consider these facts.

87%
OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 6 HAVE BOTH PARENTS WORKING.

64% OF CHILD CARE REQUESTS ARE FOR CHILDREN AGES 0-2 YEARS
86% ARE FOR CHILDREN AGES 0-4 YEARS
but very few child care providers want to provide care for 0-4 because the allowed ratio of children to providers is lower and thus profit and sustainability are greatly reduced.

A 2019 survey of households within 20 miles of Decorah found that

2/3rds OF RESPONDENTS, REPRESENTING **468 CHILDREN**, WOULD UTILIZE A NEW CHILD CARE CENTER.

As a result of low overall workforce numbers and the child care shortage, it is difficult for our businesses to recruit new employees.



demand for child care exceeds availability.



DEMAND FOR CHILD CARE EXCEEDS AVAILABILITY

Like other rural areas of the United States, much of Northeast Iowa is already considered, or is becoming, a “child care desert” with 3 times more children under age 5 than child care available for those children. In some areas of Northeast Iowa the ratio of children to child care slots is 9:1.

- » In 2018, Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral identified **2,292 CHILDREN, AGE 0-12 YRS, NEEDING CARE** in Winneshiek County. **THERE WERE ONLY 992 IDENTIFIED CHILD CARE SLOTS** available at that time and dozens have been lost since then.
- » **91%** of Winneshiek County households with children age 0-12 *have both parents employed* but there are only **937 registered child care** slots available.
- » A 2019 survey of households in a 20-mile radius of Decorah found 468 children who need care immediately.
- » **HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES ARE ON WAITING LISTS** at local child care centers.
- » Families report their children being on child care *waiting lists for 18 months to 5 years.*
- » **One of the three largest child care centers** that serves the greatest number of children in the county **is in danger of closing in the next 5 years** due to facility deficiencies and escalating expenses, and the others are struggling.
- » The number of **IN-HOME CHILD CARE FACILITIES IN WINNESHIEK COUNTY IS DECLINING**, with 9 lost for 2 established in the past few years.

The Old Model is Broken: Child development center employees and owners of home child care businesses in Winneshiek County are currently earning low wages and receive few if any benefits. Although degrees and certifications are required for many providers, they earn an average of \$9.40/hour. Even though they pay low wages, management and personnel restrictions, teacher to student ratios, facility requirements, and other related expenses escalate the cost of doing business for licensed child care centers and in-home child care facilities. As a result, registered child care providers and facilities rarely make a profit and more child care businesses are closing than opening, even though they have waiting lists for their services. Those that do stay open, have limited financial resources to update or improve aging facilities, and some cannot affordably modify existing buildings to meet fire and safety standards.

A New Business Model: Winneshiek County Development and Tourism has brought together local, state and federal experts to help Sunflower Child Development Center’s Board and staff conceive of and design a new Child Development and Discovery Center that will replace the aging Sunflower facility. The new building will not only be a model of innovative design, it will also be a model for sustainable child care business. WCDT personnel and Sunflower Board members worked with a Small Business Development Counselor, the former Director of the University of Iowa Children’s Museum, First Children’s Finance and other experts to develop an innovative business plan for a Child Development and Discovery Center. As a result, the physical design and management of the Center creates opportunities to reduce expenditures and create income.

Children First Design and Management: Classrooms will be separated from STEAM learning areas, indoor play areas, and other common-use spaces so that children from throughout the region can benefit. Common-use spaces will include two age appropriate indoor playgrounds and six fun themed STEAM learning areas, as well as a multi-use space that can be reserved for programs or children’s parties. The common-use spaces will be available for families and children from throughout the community at various times and days through scheduling. Memberships, admittance fees, public programs, and partnerships with other child care and home school programs and schools from throughout the region will provide additional income for the facility. These strategies will help the business thrive and allow Sunflower to pay more competitive wages and benefits for employees. The business plan is currently under review by First Children’s Finance to receive USDA approval. Once approved, it will help the Center qualify for federal grants and loans.

Like other rural areas of the United States, much of Northeast Iowa is already considered, or is becoming, a “child care desert”.

children first design + management.



Great child development facility design and management sets the stage for early learning success.

CHILDREN FIRST DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

The first five years of a child's life are critical for growth and learning. By the time a child turns 5 years old, their brain grows to 90% of its adult size. Every experience and activity is a chance for a child to learn and develop. The first five years of a child's life represent an invaluable time for developing the type of creativity they will need to excel in any STEAM career. Research shows that preschool aged children have an innate sense of wonder and curiosity. Preschoolers ask an amazing 76 information-seeking questions per hour. Because curiosity is at the heart of all innovation, **the earlier we can help children harness and direct their interest in exploring the world around them, the more motivated these students will be to uncover the answers they seek.**

Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman agrees with the importance of investing very early on in a child's education. According to his research

"the highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible"

and the greatest return on investment for resources spent on educational development occurs during a child's first five years of life.



Recognizing these truths, Child Development Classrooms are being designed to maximize safety, teacher and student interaction, learning, and development. Creative Curriculum "Learning Through Play" has always been incorporated into Sunflower's curriculum but the design of the new facility increases the amount of space in each classroom and provides a more learning friendly environment for the students. 19 Classrooms will have windows and multiple exits, as well as direct access to age appropriate outdoor playgrounds.

Students will also learn in other active play and learning areas within the building and outside and have access to innovative play equipment and supplies. **The classrooms and other spaces in the new facility will encourage students to learn through movement, exploration, and participation in active learning, both individually and collectively.**

There will be opportunities for children to use their imagination, have ***guided play, free play, and exploratory play.***



There will be a deliberate design to every room in the Discovery Center, all created specifically for children. The spaces will encourage children to use fine and gross motor skills, climb, crawl, and explore. They will provide opportunities to manipulate in order to discover. Some spaces will be themed; others will not. The facility will encourage free play but specific spaces will vary from one to another. Children will learn as they explore. They will have the space and materials to learn through exploration, climb, learn balance, and become immersed in play. They will be able to interact with other children in a safe environment that encourages collaboration, taking turns, and sharing. The children who use the Discovery Center portions of the facility, whether as a student or a visitor, will develop the foundations for personal and academic success.

Today, families in our community are traveling as far as LaCrosse, Rochester, and Coralville to enjoy indoor play and active learning at Children's Museums. These facilities are especially popular during extreme cold and heat and in winter months when darkness inhibits outdoor activities. The proposed facility will provide a local option for all families.

URGENCY!



Not only do we have a severe child care shortage, we continue to lose child care providers at an alarming rate... but, we can reverse the trend.

URGENCY!

Many nonprofit organizations in Winneshiek County are in the process of expanding or building new facilities. Although they are great projects, few are as timely as the construction of the Child Development and Discovery Center, which is also a nonprofit.

Why is it crucial to move forward as quickly as possible?

Not only do we have a severe child care shortage, we continue to lose child care providers at an alarming rate. Sunflower, which is one of our largest child development centers, is facing closure within the next five years because their aging and degrading facility can not be remodeled to meet new licensing requirements. They are one of the few centers to serve infants to two year olds. If we can not quickly implement a solution to this child care crisis, the decline of families with children in our communities will continue to impact enrollment in K-12 schools. Schools can not stay open if there aren't children to fill their classrooms. This decline can already be seen and measured by school closures and consolidations, which are also occurring at an alarming rate. The incoming class of kindergarten students in Decorah is the smallest class in years.



The construction and implementation of the Child Development and Discovery Center is the first step in addressing several issues including the child care shortage, declining school enrollment, workforce recruitment challenges, community decline, business closure, and child safety. Because the business model is unique and innovative, several child care centers and community leaders from throughout the region are inquiring about how to partner with the facility to ensure more child care centers stay open in the future and that our children have every opportunity to maximize their potential as early as possible.

We can't solve every child care issue, but together we can reverse the trend and start on a path to becoming a family friendly community.

Winneshiek County has a choice - Lead the nation by creating an innovative child development and discovery model that fosters healthy rural living for families or continue to watch our population decline and our children and grandchildren move away.



Social Impact the Early Years Have on Your Life

- » Healthy relationships early help build/cultivate interpersonal skills.
- » A quality learning environment also helps foster intrapersonal skills and a burgeoning sense of autonomy.
- » The amount of words children hear can substantially impact long-term success.
- » Language acquisition happens from 0-4 years of age.
- » A high-quality pre-K education has long been recognized as a way to help boost the lasting achievement of children from "the ground up." Expanding access to pre-K not only has a strong correlation to greater educational skills and higher graduation rates, but also may provide the foundation for a lifetime of better health. Additionally, pre-K education may fuel greater employment opportunities with higher earnings.

● striving for net zero.



Another goal for the facility will be to minimize energy consumption to maximize the long-term sustainability of the facility and the business.

STRIVING FOR NET ZERO

The new child development and discovery center will be **powered by a solar array and utilize a geothermal system**. The energy from the solar array will help power the geothermal. Heating and cooling shall be provided by the **geothermal heat pumps**. Heating in non-cooled spaces with exterior doors, such as the vestibule and water service room, shall be provided by electric unit heaters.

Energy efficiency will be incorporated into the design of the rooms throughout the facility. For example, "daylight harvesting" will occur and will be integrated into the automatic lighting controls. In locations with LED light fixtures, daylight harvesting will be achieved using dimmable fixtures controlled by local photo-sensors. **Automatic lighting control** will be provided throughout the entire facility. It will be achieved via occupancy/vacancy sensors located in individual spaces in addition to manual control devices. **LED lighting** will be used throughout the facility and linear direct/indirect luminaires will be utilized in open areas including classrooms and play areas.

These components will minimize energy consumption and maximize the long-term sustainability of the facility and the business. They will decrease ongoing energy costs and also model sustainability for the next generation. Alliant Energy is involved to help maximize the potential for alternative energy use and improve the efficiency of the facility.

Energy creation and use will be used as a learning tool. Students will be able to see what energy is being used and created, create energy themselves, and participate in energy projects in the Discovery Center.



Not only can we address a major community need with a new child care center, we can also be a model of sustainability for the next generation.



NAMING RIGHTS & SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

*All pledges can be made over 5 years

Name the Building!

Naming rights on the front of the building. (1)

\$800,000

Interior Entrances

Name the Entrances to the Child Care Center & Discovery Center. (2)

\$600,000

Toddler Playspace, Gym, Education & Training Hub and Feature Fence

Naming rights on spaces and influence activities. (4)

\$500,000

Discovery Center STEAM Learning Spaces

Play area themes influenced by donor. (6)

\$250,000

Child Care Classrooms

Naming rights of each classroom. (19)

\$100,000

Playgrounds

Naming rights of each outdoor playground area. (5)

\$75,000

Field of Sunflowers (5)

\$50,000

Field of Sunflowers (8)

\$25,000

Field of Sunflowers (25)

\$10,000

Field of Sunflowers (25)

\$5,000

Field of Sunflowers (50)

\$1,000 - \$2,500

Field of Sunflowers

<\$1,000