

Day care business fair is Tuesday

Williston Herald August 14, 2010

By Alta Mayhugh

Staff Writer

More than 2,000 children in Williams County are in need of child care.

But according to statistics from North Dakota Child Care Resource and Referral, the licensed child care capacity is only at 474.

These numbers point to the obvious--there's a need for more day care providers in Williams County.

Because child care is in such high demand, a Child Care Business Fair will be held this week in Williston for anyone interested in opening a day care center. The business fair is from 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Marquis Plaza and Suites, 1525 9th Ave. N.W.

The fair is also for existing child care providers who are interested in getting their businesses licensed, said James Bender, business consultant and community relations coordinator for Child Care Resource and Referral. Individuals can come at their leisure to get materials during the four-hour period, he said.

Attendees will learn about incentives they can get by starting a day care. The CCR and R has \$750 in start-up funding available to newly-licensed, home-based child care providers.

"We have set up dollars to help family and group providers of \$750 of incentive funds, that helps them purchase resources and materials in order to create a quality environment that really provides educational, social, cognitive, physical and developmental opportunities for these children in their care as well as working with our consultant to best set up that environment for these children so we know that not only are we looking at developing the workforce within Williston and Williams County, and western North Dakota, but also improve on that quality, and help out with the technical assistance of their programs, and therefore, once we build up those new providers, we'll increase the capacity of care and hopefully meet that need," Bender said.

Bender, a family consultant and a center consultant will offer assistance as far as looking at environments within child care settings and helping identify the tools needed to run a child care business. Bender can help with the aspects of having a day care such as record-keeping and looking at a business plan.

The Williams County licenser will be out of town, but Bender plans to have North Dakota rules and regulations with him, application packets for individuals looking at becoming licensed providers and contact information for the licenser, he said. And Jennifer Barry, department of human services, will help with licensing. She will oversee the licenser and help individuals looking at getting established, he said.

Child care is desperately needed in Williston; there's a shortage of providers because some are either finding jobs that pay more or not having to work because their spouses have jobs in the oil field, Bender said.

"As the oil boom has hit and individuals may not need to work or maybe they're finding jobs that pay a little higher, people just aren't doing child care. But, for any community, a child care system in place is so vital to the infrastructure. And I just look at it as, if you don't have child care, you can't go to work as a parent, and therefore, whether your wage suffers or your employer suffers due to the inactive productivity, it's just a full circle that's so needed in that area," he said.

Child care during the day is needed, but there's also a need for providers who can care for children overnight and during the weekends, Bender said. Many parents in town work the grave yard shift and on weekends.

"We're trying to increase the capacity of child care throughout North Dakota," Bender said.