



# Quality Child Care Matters

## UNITED WAY ECE TASK FORCE

One of the most glaring struggles North Idaho families face is the cost of child care. To look deeper into this issue, UWNI developed the **Early Care & Education (ECE) Task Force** to identify barriers and ways to improve conditions.

The ECE Task Force focuses on building public-private partnerships to invest in early care infrastructure, strengthen the child care workforce, and increase the availability of high-quality early care to working families.

### Quality child care matters to...

#### Children's Families

Quality child care or preschool function as cornerstones to a child's healthy development, as well as to a family's income stability and growth. Yet many ALICE families struggle to obtain this essential need for reasons including affordability, quality, assistance, and availability.

#### Local Business

Employers who invest in quality child care for their employees see benefits in recruitment and retention, which saves money and time.

#### School System

When children enter school unprepared, it not only puts them behind in learning, but it greatly affects the ability for teachers to focus on the entire classroom

#### Child Care Providers

Child care and preschool teachers are often ALICE themselves, tasked with nurturing essential early childhood learning but barely making ends meet.

#### Community

Studies show children who enter school ready to learn are more likely to graduate on time and less likely to require public assistance as adults.

#### Child's Future

Not being able to afford quality child care has consequences not only for ALICE families, but also for the strength and stability of the local economy and the future of the wider community.



**Partners:** Panhandle Health District – Child Care Resource Center, Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls Chambers of Commerce, North Idaho College, NIC Head Start, Mountain States Early Head Start, University of Idaho – Coeur d'Alene, CDA 2030, Coeur d'Alene School District 271, current and retired early care professionals

# Early Care & Education Initiatives and **How to Help**

## **BUSINESS SUPPORTED CHILD CARE**

Through a Preschool the Idaho Way grant from Idaho Association for Education of Young Children, UWNI has developed a guide for businesses interested in learning more about child care as a recruitment/retention tool.

**HOW TO HELP:** To take part, reach out to the Early Care & Education Task Force at United Way of North Idaho.

## **CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS**

The UWNI Child Care Scholarships support families who are attending school or are employed and need assistance paying for child care, and who don't qualify for the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP). In partnership with the NIC Center for New Directions. Funding from Pita Pit Round Up, Ride for ALICE, and Idaho Community Foundation.

**HOW TO HELP:** Refer families who are in need or donate to the scholarship fund.

## **FIRST BIRTHDAY**

The First Birthday project aims to provide every one-year-old with a book and some type of toy or activity. In partnership with Heritage Health, a birthday card is sent with a one-year child checkup reminder card. At the wellness check, the child receives his/her gift which also includes resources for parents/caregivers. Pilot program partially funded by the Coeur d'Alene Rotary.

## **READY! FOR KINDERGARTEN**

The READY! for Kindergarten® school readiness program provides parents and caregivers with tools and activities to optimize children's natural curiosity and nurture learning and development. READY! is possible through partnerships with the Coeur d'Alene, Lakeland, and Post Falls School Districts. Sponsored by Alliance Data. Additional support provided by Figpickels, Kroc Center, Domino's Pizza. **HOW TO HELP:** Volunteer to be a classroom host or donate to sponsor kits for local Kootenai County families.

## **CHILD CARE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING**

READY! for Kindergarten Child Care and Preschool training module is STARS certified for continuing education of child care professionals. Also with funding from the Wells Fargo Foundation, UWNI offers a Child Care Business Development Program, a series training, tools, and follow-up coaching.

## **LAUNCH INTO LEARNING**

Launch into Learning is an activity book for parents and caregivers to enjoy with their pre-K children. In partnership with the Community Library Network, Innovia Foundation's Opening Books, Opening Doors initiative, and Annette Eberlein, MLS. Funded by United Way of North Idaho and Union Pacific Railroad Foundation. **HOW TO HELP:** Connect us to distribution points or simply donate so we can distribute more!

## **PROGRAM GRANT FUNDING**

United Way of North Idaho's Community Care Fund grants provide funding to local early care and education programs. **Athol Elementary After School Program.** Educational enrichment for students in a community that has few after school learning opportunities. **Growing the STEM's Math is Cool Program.** A local nonprofit that organizes and supports math and science programs for students in Coeur d'Alene Public Schools, with an emphasis on developing youth leaders and encouraging underrepresented groups to pursue STEM education and activities. **Lee Pesky Learning Center's Idaho Early Literacy Project.** Provides evidence-based literacy professional development and coaching to pre-school through second-grade teachers who serve students at high risk of falling behind in reading. **ICARE Program of St. Vincent de Paul.** To reduce the risk factors that increasingly challenge families today and offer strategies for strengthening families in need of extra support through home visiting services to families in Kootenai, Bonner, and Shoshone counties. **HOW TO HELP:** Donate to the Community Care Fund!