Local child care facilities making good use of EDC funds

By Aaron Rubin
Standard Correspondent

With the new school year underway, many of the Woodstock area's littlest ones are also back in child care and afterschool programs. According to area child care providers, they are able to offer more services to a growing number of students thanks in part to an influx of funding from the Woodstock Economic Development Commission (EDC).

Bridgewater Community Childcare

Coming off the one year anniversary of its opening in June, Bridgewater Community Childcare (BCC) is expecting to enter a strong second year thanks to $100,000 in funding from the EDC. Program director Kristiana Birmingham said the facility opened its second classroom on Sept. 1, increasing capacity from 14 to 30 students. But it didn't stop there.

"BCC also opened its third classroom a week later and an additional bathroom, raising capacity to 45 and we are in the midst of construction on the final child care bathroom, which will allow us to bring all of our classrooms to full capacity of 52 students," said Birmingham.

The grant has allowed for BCC to become a year round facility serving children six weeks old to 5 years old, Monday through Friday. It has also given them the ability to add their "infant classroom, toddler classroom and preschool classroom" while entering the final stages towards completion of a new "Afterschool Care" program for preschool children through second grade, said Birmingham.

Birmingham said, "Currently our waiting list is around 30. We have families from all over the Upper Valley, with a large percentage from Woodstock and Bridgewater. We have not opened up our Afterschool Care for waitlist yet, but anticipate that [we] will have a similar list from our surveys."

To support its growing student population, BCC is currently in process of interviewing and hiring new staff for an appropriate student-to-educator ratio per state regulations on child care. Birmingham said that while the facility is still "struggling with [hiring] qualified early childhood educators" to fill some of its teaching roles, they are working with their community partners and staff "to help create strong candidates and support staff, who are wanting to further their careers in the [Early Childhood Education] field."

The Mill School

The newly opened Mill School in Woodstock has come to life with the support of funds from the EDC, according to founder Caroline Olsen. She said that all funding for its programming, a total of $94,679, will be phased out in three stages by the end of October given increases in the number of students.

Olsen said there were more than 50 families with children on the list for attendance, eight of whom were enrolled immediately. An additional four children will be enrolled by the end of September.

"We have a list of 12 additional families in the 6-week to 3-year [age] range needing care in the near future," said Olsen. "We opened just as other centers expanded their capacity, so some of the families on our list have found care elsewhere — which means the EDC funding is doing its job."

She said the center recognizes the "immediate need for aftercare for pre-K children" and is determined to meet that need. That includes figuring out how to provide transportation for enrolled students from Woodstock Elementary School to the Mill School.

"We have been working hard with the district to try to come up with a solution," said Olsen.

Nonetheless, the center is fully staffed with three full-time and one part-time employee for its currently enrolled children, while an additional three full-time employees are on deck for when enrollment increases, said Olsen. "None of the EDC funding is being used to find or hire staff. We're attracting staff with our mission and higher pay," she added. With a new childcare team and plenty of outdoor space for students to explore, there are lots of opportunities for programming, said Olsen.

"We plan to have VINS programming at our center this year too!" she concluded.

The Community Campus

With $30,000 in funding from the EDC, the team at the Community Campus (TCC) has been able to expand by adding a full-time program coordinator, Suzanna Marshall, said the facility's program administrator Logan Radde. Marshall is bringing more than ten years of early childhood care and her background in art to TCC, which Radde said has "increased the quality and experience for everyone involved."

Funding also allowed TCC to hire a part-time teacher aide from Woodstock Union High School, increase the average number of students at its summer camp from 11 in 2022 to 19 this past summer, and to bolster Radde's involvement in school affairs.

"The student experience has been greatly impacted with continuing our goal of being active and engaging through structural games but also furthering their creative drive in challenging crafts and art work, which can be seen in our snapshots of summer days on our Instagram page @ thecommunitycampus," said Radde.

Radde says that even with some new hires, "TCC is still in need of part-time staff through our afterschool programming but primarily for the next summer camp 2024 season. We are expecting to continue to grow as we have each year, and to go from 17 kids on average per day to an estimated 24 kids. To do this though, we need to hire more part-time and seasonal staff in order to stay within ratio needs."

Enrollment at TCC has also been expanded thanks to EDC funding. The facility now serves an average of 22 students per day, an increase from 17 last year, according to Radde. A total of 38 students have been enrolled over the course of the school year, with all students being broken up into five eight-week sections.

Because of this model, there are no students currently on the waitlist for enrollment. And while the facility is maxed-out in its registration for some of its days, that still should not be worrisome for families, said Radde.

"Our registration is not a typical childcare center where you register for a locked spot for a whole year. We program five eight-week sections over the course of the school year that allows families to register for the days or weeks they need," he said. "This prevents families overpaying and allows TCC to serve a greater need in community care. If we were to lock in our spots, we would only be able to serve 26 families, one child per family."

EDC funding means that TCC's programming can be expanded as well. While continuing its monthly tradition of Saturday evening pizza, games, crafts, and a movie, the facility is also planning a third annual Haunted Halloween event. The event will take place on Oct. 28 from 5-9 p.m., and registration is open until Oct. 23 on TCC's website.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) and Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) implementing regulations at Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 9, FEMA hereby provides final notice of its decision to provide Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding for an action located in a floodplain. Funding would be provided through Vermont Emergency Management to the Town of West Windsor to acquire and demolish the West Windsor Fire Station. The action is located on VT Route 44 in Brownsville, VT.

The project is within a mapped special flood hazard area (SFHA), otherwise known as the 1% annual chance Floodplain. Construction associated with a demolition in the floodplain would be negligible and temporary. In the long-term, the values of the floodplain would be restored, and natural flood storage capacity at the site would improve. Restoring the natural floodplain would increase flood storage, improve water quality, and create wildlife habitat. A map of the area of available upon request.

The project must in be in a floodplain because the work associated with the demolition is functionally dependent upon its location in the SFHA; the structure is located in a flood-vulnerable location. There are no practicable alternatives to the proposed action occurring in or near a floodplain. The floodplain is the only practicable location for demolition of this flood-prone structure to occur. Grant conditions will also require compliance with all federal, state and local laws, including coordination with the local floodplain administrator.

Map requests and comments about this project and potential floodplain impacts should be submitted within 15 days of the date of this publication to:

Kari Elkins, Environmental Protection Specialist
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Boston, MA
kari.elkins@fema.dhs.gov; (256) 343-3570

Woodstock Zoning Permits

TOWN OF WOODSTOCK NOTICE OF HEARING:

The Town Development Review Board will hold a public hybrid meeting at 7:30 PM on Tuesday, October 24, 2023, to consider the following zoning permit applications:

T-0023-24: Curtis Barr; **Lister No.:** 11.04.15; **Location:** 639 Benedict Road; **Review Type:** Conditional Use Approval; **Proposal:** To construct a 14' x 20' open shed

TOWN OF WOODSTOCK ZONING PERMITS

PERMITEE: Kevin Powers; **APPLICATION NUMBER**: T-0018-24; **LISTER'S NUMBER**: 07.01.08.001; **LOCATION**: 1184 Westerdale Road; **THIS PERMIT SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZES THE PERMITEE(S) TO**: To extend existing deck 4' to the east.

PERMITEE: Denese Pugh; **APPLICATION NUMBER**: T-0020-24; **LISTER'S NUMBER**: 05.01.19; **LOCATION**: 2127 E Woodstock Rd; **THIS PERMIT SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZES THE PERMITEE(S) TO**: To renovate 1113 SF including kitchen, basement and converting laundry room to bathroom.

PERMITEE: Norma Thomson; **APPLICATION NUMBER**: T-0021-24; **LISTER'S NUMBER**: 09.01.19; **LOCATION**: 302 The Lane; **THIS PERMIT SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZES THE PERMITEE(S) TO**: To construct a 22' x 24' garage.

PERMITEE: Diane Atwood; **APPLICATION NUMBER**: T-0027-24; **LISTER'S NUMBER**: 03.02.59; **LOCATION**: 2741 Cox District Rd; **THIS PERMIT SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZES THE PERMITEE(S) TO**: To construct an 18' 8" by 15' breezeway connecting house and garage.

VILLAGE OF WOODSTOCK ZONING PERMITS

PERMITEE: Andrea and Robert Sand; **APPLICATION NUMBER**: V-0010-24; **LISTER'S NUMBER**: 24.51.52.004; **LOCATION**: 18 High Street; **THIS PERMIT SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZES THE PERMITEE(S) TO**: To construct a 22' x 24' garage.