

Addison County

EARLY CHILDHOOD GUIDE



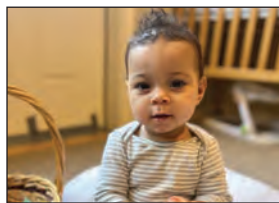
A Publication of the Addison Independent

Thursday, April 3, 2025



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ACT 76 • VERMONT'S CHILDCARE LAW

Growing our childcare options here in Addison County



By SEN. RUTH HARDY

Have you noticed new childcare programs springing up all over Addison County? To name a few, the Salisbury Children's Center opened last fall next to the town offices. Red Clover Children's Center opened last year at the Congregational Church in Middlebury. A new program is opening this year at the former Addison Central School. The Wren's Nest Forest Preschool opened last year in the woods of Bristol. The Otter Creek Child Center in Middlebury is undergoing a major expansion, re-opening next year with spots for over 130 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

This abundant crop of high-quality childcare programs is the direct result of Vermont's Historic Childcare Law Act 76, which became law in 2023. Statewide, more than 90 new childcare programs have opened and 1,000 spots for children have been created over the past two years. Plus, 1,600 additional families are receiving help paying for childcare. The success of Act 76 has been truly remarkable!

For working parents of young children, few things are as necessary as high-quality, affordable childcare. Without childcare, parents are less likely to get to work and make ends meet, employers are less likely to find reliable workers, and children are less likely to be ready for school. This was especially true following the pandemic, when many childcare providers closed up shop and parents, especially mothers, had to leave the workforce.

In 2023, the state Legislature passed Vermont's Historic Childcare Law Act 76, which invests significant funding to help parents pay for childcare, providers expand and improve their programs, and teachers get more education and higher salaries. Fueled by a modest payroll tax that is shared between employers and employees, Act 76 provides sliding-scale tuition assistance for parents making up to \$185,000 annually for a family of four. This means that nearly all of Vermont's working families are able to get help paying for childcare. Act 76 also increases payments to childcare programs so they can pay teachers more and provide them with more training, which leads to less turnover and higher-quality care.

Here in Addison County the benefits of Act 76 can be seen everywhere. Well-cared-for children, supported parents, valued educators, and successful employers all make for a healthy, vibrant community. It's so wonderful to see!

Sen. Ruth Hardy, D-Addison County, is the mother of three young adults who all benefited from high-quality childcare. She is the lead sponsor and chief architect of 2023 Act 76, Vermont's Historic Childcare Law.



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ADDISON COUNTY: AT THE FOREFRONT OF CHILDCARE IN VERMONT

By **ASHLEY BESSETTE**
UNIVERSAL PREK COORDINATOR

Addison County has long been revered as a leader in early childhood education in Vermont for a number of reasons. It boasts high-quality, long-standing programs with clear philosophical beliefs that children come first in all we do. Programs that believe that inquiry and play is at the center of healthy early childhood development and experiences.

Addison County is home to some of the most active and supportive leaders amongst our early education centers and preschools. We have leaders that are ethical, motivated, intelligent and highly qualified to do this work. They mentor, advocate, coach, and bring people together. We have teachers that are passionate, creative, and push themselves on the ground and in higher education to achieve more and become better. We have early education classrooms that bring inquiry and warmth to all children who enter. We are a community that believes in the power of the early years.

After running my own preschool program for over a decade, I've learned a lot in my new role at Universal PreK Coordinator thus far. When I was a Director, I knew *MY* program and that was my day-to-day focus — where I put all my energy into staff, children and families. Throughout those years, I collaborated with my fellow early childhood colleagues in many ways, but I was highly focused on what I was doing in my own space. In the last nine months, I have been in over 40 classrooms serving the 410 children in Universal PreK in Addison County. I've watched dozens of teachers interact with children and implement curriculum. I have been nothing short of blown away!

This is what I've learned, early childhood education and preschool is not one size fits all. It doesn't have to be implemented in a universal way to be successful. It can look like so many things! It can look like the "Wish You Well" song at Otter Creek Child Center where children and teachers sing a sweet love song to their friends who aren't there. It can look like wool felting at Mary Johnson Children's Center. It can be

a day spent in the forest at Wren's Nest where hammocks are rest mats. It can be putting on a circus at Lincoln Cooperative Preschool or writing a children's book at Evergreen Preschool. It can be tending the chickens at Quarry Hill School or swinging inside at Play Lab. It looks like family suppers, smiles at the door, checking in on each other, sharing resources and so much more. What our early education programs are doing in the field is incredible and it's something we should all be proud of.

I've had the privilege of leading a Community of Practice with over 15 local preschool teachers this year. We meet monthly to share our classroom experiences and find extensions to our practice to build and grow. We discuss literacy and math, the classroom environment, books and songs, and how to extend children's interest and learning. These teachers come together each month in the most supportive way, immersing themselves in growth and discovery. They lean on one another, brainstorm together and actively build their practice as a cohort.

They have such powerful ideas, creative avenues to reach all children and a genuine thirst to be the best they can be. Every month, I leave inspired by their dedication, intellect and passion.

I've learned that nothing is impossible within these high-quality programs. Children are thriving in a variety of ways in our early education system in Addison County and that's predominantly because of the people who make up this system. It's the directors, the teachers, the assistants, the cooks, the special educators, the outreach support, and the parents and families. It certainly does take a village and my biggest take away is that our village is really extraordinary. Something we should be proud of and celebrate often. Thank you to all of you who make early childhood education thrive! In this Month of the Young Child- we all applaud you!



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The group will meet for 6 weeks, starting soon!
Open to parents of kids of any age who are interested in receiving services at CSAC.

For information or to sign up, call Paul
(802) 388-6751 ext. 475

Resource Parent Curriculum (RPC+) TIPS for Tuning In

A 10-week workshop for foster, adoptive and kin caregivers about the impact of trauma on the development, attachment, emotions, and behaviors of the children and youth in their care.

The workshop provides a safe space for caregivers to: access compassionate training; learn concrete strategies to manage daily and ongoing challenges; enhance relationships with their children; and build a network of support with fellow caregivers.

Facilitated by CSAC Youth and Family Outreach Clinicians. Coming this fall!

Questions or want to register?

Call Heather: (802) 388-6751 ext. 438 or Donna: (802) 989-2776

Breakthrough Parenting Curriculum (BPC)

A 10-week course for biological parents struggling to understand their child's behavior. Similar to the RPC+ class. Next class starts Fall 2025

Contact Sarah for details on upcoming offerings:

smuss@csac-vt.org or (802) 388-6751 ext. 274

FROM HANDS-ON LEARNING TO PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Needle felting’s impact on children and educators

By JACKIE PRIME

At Mary Johnson Children’s Center, we believe in the power of experiences that engage children deeply, sparking wonder and exploration. One such experience that has captivated both children and teachers is needle felting, an artistic and sensory-rich activity that nurtures development across multiple domains.

If you’ve ever watched a child press soft wool between their fingers, carefully poking it with a felting needle, you know the magic of this process. In our preschool classrooms, needle felting has become an unexpected yet profoundly meaningful practice. What may seem like a simple art activity is actually a powerful tool for fine motor development, focus, creativity, and emotional regulation.

At first, needle felting may seem too delicate or intricate for young children, but when introduced thoughtfully, it becomes an accessible and rewarding experience. Teachers guide children through the process — selecting wool, shaping it with their hands, and using special felting needles to bond the fibers together. The repetitive motion of poking the wool requires concentration and precision, strengthening small hand muscles that are essential for writing and other fine motor skills.

Beyond the physical skills, needle felting engages children emotionally and socially. The rhythmic movement of the needle can be soothing, offering children a way to find focus and calm. The process also encourages patience — there is no instant result in felting; the

wool transforms gradually, teaching children about perseverance and the beauty of slow, intentional work.

Collaboration often unfolds naturally in our classrooms as children share ideas, pass along colors of wool, or admire each other’s work. “Look at mine!” one child exclaims, holding up a felted Stegosaurus. Another carefully observes a friend’s process, inspired to try something new. These moments foster language development, social connections, and confidence in self-expression.

At MJCC, our commitment to elevating early education extends beyond the classroom. With 57% of our classroom teachers assigned to a room and 52% of educators across all sites actively pursuing higher education or professional credentials, we are thrilled to see so many of our team members deepening their knowledge and growing in their profession. Additionally, four teachers from our three sites will travel to Reggio Emilia, Italy, this May to study the Reggio approach firsthand — an opportunity that will bring fresh inspiration and innovative practices back to Vermont.

The impact of Act 76 has been transformative, providing critical support to children, families, and educators in our community. This investment in early childhood education ensures that more educators have access to the resources and opportunities needed to advance their skills, ultimately enriching the experiences of the young learners in

(See Felting, Page 8)





UNCERTAIN TIMES FOR CHILDCARE FUNDING

**Let's work together to preserve
quality childcare in Vermont**

**By DONNA BAILEY, DIRECTOR ADDISON COUNTY
PARENT/CHILD CENTER**

These are uncertain times. Not being sure if we have federal funding for human services is a scary and daunting way to work. In Vermont, Medicaid dollars are the underpinnings of all services for children and families and any work that is within the Agency of Human Services. At the Addison County Parent/Child Center, half of our budget is federally funded. This includes home visiting and services through Children's Integrated Services, mental health, housing, food, childcare, pregnancy prevention and academics. Vermont has made good use of federal dollars, and they are the base of support systems for Vermont families.

We have made great progress in childcare affordability in the state of Vermont, but we are far from where we need to be to ensure a vibrant care system for children and one for working families in our state. While we are less dependent on federal aid than we were, Childcare subsidies are supported by the childcare block grant and TANF block grant — federal dollars covering millions of dollars of tuition and supports for young children. More than 10% of the childcare subsidies are federal. We need these dollars, or we pay more locally.

Children are the poorest Vermonters, and women are second. Our combined resources that pay for education and care are crucial to preventing the pain and. Destruction of poverty and helping to move all Vermonters forward. Without these federal and state funds, Vermont families would suffer.

Paying for childcare is a matter of priorities in our budget. Financial support helps current families, and it helps the future children and parents stay in Vermont. Our children and young families need to be able to be supported in basic services. This is the purpose of federal funding — to guarantee a safety net of support for all Americans. We want our children to grow up to be healthy and productive members of society, with the hopes and dreams of being self-reliant a possibility. Without a safety net of support that we have had for generations, we cannot guarantee this for our children.

In a nation of plenty, we can work together to move us all forward. Childcare is a critical part of our infrastructure. High-quality childcare, while not inexpensive, is crucial to childhood wellbeing and the ability for parents to work without undue stress.



Felting

(Continued from Page 7)

our care. Just as children explore and transform wool into something new, we as educators continue to evolve, shaping the future of early childhood education with passion and purpose.

In the end, early education is about more than academic readiness — it is about nurturing a child's natural curiosity, creativity, and sense of wonder. As Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, reminds us, "Our task, regarding creativity, is to help children climb their own mountains, as high as possible." Whether through the tactile exploration of needle felting or the dynamic exchange of ideas between educators, we are building something lasting: a strong, inspired foundation that honors the hundred languages of children and empowers them to construct knowledge through meaningful experiences.





INFANTS LEARN DURING EVERY PART OF THEIR DAY

By **COURTNEY OTIS, INFANT/TODDLER TEACHER**
MARY JOHNSON CHILDREN'S CENTER

Childcare is essential, it's been said and advocated for.

Childcare is essential for working parents and the economy. But most importantly high-quality childcare is essential for a child's development. So much brain development happens in those early years, yet it's often forgotten that even infants are learning in every part of their days.

There can be a stigma about childcare and babies, that there isn't much learning happening and they are just playing. Well, they are playing. They are playing, exploring, creating, and discovering. Through play, infants are learning about the world around them, how things work and about themselves and others.

To me, the most important thing about being an infant room teacher is the relationships that we build and the nurturing that we give.

I have worked in an infant room for almost 10 years here in Addison County and it is truly the most rewarding job. Meeting new parents for the first time, hearing about their baby and their family, being with them for that first year of life, to be frank, it's raw and special. That first year can be hard, being a mother myself, parenting can feel overwhelming sometimes. My co-teacher and I strive to create

a welcoming and calm environment where families feel comfortable. Comfortable enough to share about things in parenting that are feeling a lot to them or even just stories about themselves previous to having children, about their jobs, their childhood.

All those moments and conversations are what builds such a strong relationship and will 100% in turn benefit their child. I can't say enough how important creating relationships with the parents of the little ones you care for is. I still keep in touch and see my first ever group of families, who's babies are now in 5th grade! That itself is something that makes this job so incredible.

I get to watch the babies in my care make huge connections every day. Observing them explore their environment with all their senses and interact with materials is magical. Watching them figure out something after working so hard makes me so proud of them, and knowing I get to be a part of that is such an amazing feeling.

The connections whether that be with children and their families or the connection they are making with materials they explore are so important at this age. It's all about connection and it's something I truly enjoy about my position as an infant room teacher. Connecting and communicating with people is such an important part of life and learning, especially in those early years!





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THERAPEUTIC CARE:

By BECKY WATTERS, ADDISON COUNTY PARENT CHILD CENTER

Therapeutic childcare is a deep dive into social emotional development with a lens on building resiliency, strengthening and developing executive functioning skills, and on healthy attachments. Every aspect of the routine is met with dependability, warmth and curiosity here at the Addison County Parent Child Center childcare and Playlab preschool. The culture at the APCC is one that is unique. Many children have walked in announcing “I’m Home!”

Dependability that a child and their parents know who to expect when they arrive at the door daily is crucial to developing healthy attachments and trust. Staff come to work on a daily basis is one part; the other is when children know what to expect, the routine and rituals of the day are the same day after day. Facial expressions, tone of voice and words all match the adult’s faces throughout the day in order to foster security. Caregivers hold boundaries knowing that children thrive with the comfort of the physical and emotional fences provided. Children are seen as individuals that are treated with the idea that “fair

Creating an environment of safety, resiliency and warmth for children

isn’t always equal and equal isn’t always fair”; not everyone needs the same things throughout the day, teaching flexibility and empathy. Feelings are talked about and modeled all of the time; embarrassment and disappointment are given lots of attention to gain self-control skills. Supporting children in fixing their mistakes increases self-awareness, initiative and empathy.

Warmth grows relationships between the child and caregiver and slowly leaks between peers too. When behaviors are seen as a symptom there are more opportunities to play with a child and change the dance. Staying in very close proximity to anyone who becomes mad quickly and offering words to use and different choices to handle the anger supports peer relationships while building self-confidence, self-esteem and healthy attachments between both caregiver to child relationships and peer to peer relationships. All feelings are welcomed and encouraged to be used. When a child and their family enter the building daily they are approached with freshness of each day is a new day and new opportunities to learn.

Curiosity fosters all relationships, and supports the caregivers to see challenging behaviors as symptoms versus labeling a child. Transitions are seen as opportunities to practice skills such as self-control or healthy dependence or independence skill building. Another part of curiosity is self-reflection. Caregivers use a set of attributes, created and written by ACPCC staff, that is in the “I’m Home!!: A Manual for Providing Therapeutic Childcare.” There is space in the week to meet with other staff for peer supervision, offering another place for reflection. Clear and direct communication from caregivers to children and caregivers to parents builds trust, healthy attachments and co-regulation. Between staff it’s crucial to the work environment; there is an understanding that when the air is clean between adults then the atmosphere is clean and fun for children.

All children need space to work on social emotional skills in an environment with warmth, curiosity and dependability; who doesn’t need that as a strong foundation?



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MEET THE THIRD TEACHER IN THE CLASSROOM: The Environment

By KERRY MALLOY
LINCOLN COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

There is a small sign at our preschool, titled “Messages In The Environment,” for adults to read, detailing the kind of environment we want to be presenting to children.

It states, “This a cheerful and happy place, You belong here, This is a place you can trust, You can do things on your own and be independent, You can get away and be by yourself when you need to, This is a safe place to explore and try out ideas, This is a place where your work is valued and appreciated.”

The environment is often referred to as the Third Teacher, with parents being the first, and teachers as the second. As early childhood teachers, we are constantly thinking of how every aspect of our environment might be affecting a child’s behavior or needs, and how we can affect changes. Creating opportunities for hands-on learning means the early childhood environment is continuously being adapted to allow for new experiences.

Young children have an “extraordinary hardwiring to be curious, to explore, to connect, to feel, and to solve — all of which are skills that predict the academic outcomes most adults want for their children,” (Erika Christakis in “The Importance of Being Little”). Children will do this anywhere and everywhere. It is one of the joys of teaching young children that we get to create environments, and routines, where we can foster this incredible drive to learn through play, social interactions, and teacher relationships.

Some days children come to school and get deeply engaged with the materials of their choice, building huge block structures, having group imaginative play in the play kitchen, working on their own ideas next to a

(See Environment, Page 15)





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Environment

(Continued from Page 13)

fully stocked art cart. Other days there is overflowing high energy and we have choices to bring out materials, like bouncy ride on horses, spinning seats, or rocking boards, to happily meet children's need for more active play. We also have many choices to bring out calming materials to see what best meets individual needs.

An important aspect of the environment at our preschool is that children have open-ended time, and agency. Children arriving in the morning have almost an hour and a half to start their day freely choosing where and what they want to play with, can move freely within our classroom to any area, and can move materials anywhere to suit their play needs. This affords teachers many opportunities to observe and interact with children individually or with peers. Another highly valued part of our environment/routine is outdoor play. Most of the school year we are outdoors for 4 hours a day and have the physical set up to comfortably do that. As with so many of the high-quality Early Learning centers in Addison County, we have a large and stimulating outdoor play area with sleds, bikes, scooters, swings, mud kitchen, outdoor blocks, sand area, etc.

There is great diversity in Early Childhood Learning environments within Addison County and, indeed, in all of Vermont. The majority of these environments, for infants to preschoolers, are privately based and have been carefully developed, in many cases, for decades. There are children tucked in former elementary school classrooms, there are forest-based schools, there are schools that prefer less materials out at once, and schools with an abundance of materials out at once. The important factor in all the diverse environments is a dedicated, knowledgeable, and professional workforce who understand what is truly important for young children's growth and development. Young children need an environment filled with opportunities for exploration, loving relationships with teachers who are skilled at observing and scaffolding their development, humor, safety, and a social group of peers to learn with.

The spaces we have in Addison County are beautiful designs tailored to the unique developmental period of our youngest children. I am a strong advocate for maintaining the public/private early learning environment infrastructure we HAVE. I also advocate for letting 3- and 4-years-old children play together, they are a wonderful cohort in the

same developmental phase, and the impacts we've been able to have with children being with us for two years is huge.

As an adult, I treasure being able to work in a beautiful and stimulating space, having fun and joyful learning experiences with young children. It's the best.





Center/ Home	Name	Ages	Schedule	PreK Partner	Town	Notes/Contact Info
Center	Quarry Hill School	3-5	School Year/ school day	Yes	Middlebury	www.quarryhillschool.org office@quarryhillschool.org
Center	Otter Creek Child Center	6 wks-5	Year Round, M-F	Yes	Middlebury	www.ottercreekcc.org office@ottercreekcc.org
Center	College Street Children's Center	6 wks-5	Year Round, M-F	No	Middlebury	cscddirector228@gmail.com
Center	Evergreen Preschool	3-5	School Year/half day and full day	Yes	Vergennes	Evergreenpreschoolvt@gmail.com
Center	MAUSD Early Education Program	3-5	School Year, 10 hr/week pro- gram	Yes	Bristol	lindsay.hance@mausd.org
Center	MAUSD Early Education Program	3-5	School Year, M-F, 8-5	Yes	Bristol	heidi.bullock@mausd.org
Center	Wren's Nest Forest Preschool	3-5	School Year, M-F, 8-4:30	Yes	Bristol	info@willowell.org
Home	Carolyn Fogg	Birth-12	School Year, M-F, 7-4:30	No	Monkton	cfogg1979@gmail.com
Center	Starksboro Cooperative Preschool	3-5	School Year, M-F, + Summer Pro- gram, half day, 7:30-1, & full day, 7:30-4:30	Yes	Starksboro	starkscoop@gmail.com
Center	Aurora Preschool	3-5	Year Round, 7:30-5	No	Middlebury	auroralearningcentervt@gmail.com
Center	Bristol Family Center	6 wks-6 years	Year Round, M-F	Yes	Bristol	www.bristolfamilycenter.org awhitcomb@bristolfamilycen- ter.org
Center	Addison County Parent Child Center	0-5	School Year, 8-4 and M-F, 8-4 in summer	Yes	Serving Addison County in Middlebury, with transpor- tation	dbailey@addisoncountypcc.org
Home	Mountain Road Preschool	6 wks - 10 yrs	Full Year, M-F, 7:15-4:45	Yes	Addison	mountainroadpreschool@gmail.com
Home	Misty Scott	6 wks - 10 yrs	Full Year, M-F, 7-5	No	Vergennes	ckcc@comcast.net 802-877-6977 3 STAR Provider www.facebook.com/Curi- ousKidsChildCareMistyScott
Home	Evelyn Burlock	6 wks - 10 yrs	Full Year, M-F, 7-5	No	Vergennes	eburlock27@yahoo.com 802-788-2506
Center	Mary Johnson Children's Center (MJCC)	3 mos - 5 yrs	Full Year	Yes	Middlebury	office@mjcvt.org www.mjcvt.org
Center	Mary Johnson Children's Center (MJCC)	18 mos - 5 yrs	Full Year	Yes	East Middlebury	office@mjcvt.org www.mjcvt.org



Center/ Home	Name	Ages	Schedule	PreK Partner	Town	Notes/Contact Info
Center	Orwell Early Education Program (MJCC)	3 yrs-5 yrs	Full Year	Yes	Middlebury	office@mjccvt.org www.mjccvt.org
Center	Middlebury After School Program	K-5th grade	After School- School Year. Summer weeks are FT	No	Middlebury	school-age@mjccvt.org www.mjccvt.org
Home	Heather Armell	6 wks-5 yrs	Full Year, M-F, 7:15-4:30,	No	Monkton	littletykes2007@yahoo.com
Home	Bethany Hallock	Birth to 12	Full Year, M-F 7:30-4:30,	No	Ferrisburgh	gbthallock@juno.com
Home	Donna Meacham	Birth to 12	Full Year, M-F, 7:30-4:30	No	New Haven	dondarnea@gmavt.net 802-453-5383
Center	Lincoln Cooperative Preschool	3-5	7:30-3. Some after care available	Yes	Lincoln	preschool@gmavt.net
Home	Sunshine Childcare	Birth-5	Full Year, M-F, 7-4:30	No	Addison	sunshinecc21@gmail.com
Home	Jennifer Cyr Family Child Care	Birth-4	Year-Round, M-TH	No	Middlebury	jennifercyr2@gmail.com www.jennifercyrfamilychildcare.com
Center	Addison County Early Learning Center (Head Start)	16 mos-5	Preschool-School Year, Toddler classroom-Year Round, both, M-F, 8:30-2:30	Yes	New Haven	psutlive@cvoeo.org, Peg Sutlive
Public Pre-K (Center)	ANWSD Early Education Program	3-5	School Year only, 8:15 -1:15. Extended care, 1:15-4:30	Yes	Ferrisburgh	mtierney@anwsd.org, Marcie Tierney
Home	Laura Weber	Blrth-12	Year Round, M-F, 7-4:30	No	Hancock	lmw15vt@yahoo.com
Center	The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten	3 yrs-Kinder- garten , school year. 3-10 summer	School Year & Summer program, M-F, 7:30-5	No	Waltham	arkdirector@victoryvt.org Rachael Boyce, Director 802-877-3393
Center	Cornerstone Preschool	3-5	School Year, M-F, 7:30-5	No	Vergennes	office@cornerstone-prek.org
Center/ School	Bridport Central School Preschool	3-5	School Year, M-Th, 7:45-2:45	Yes	Bridport	Heather Adams, Preschool Director, 802-758-2331 hadams@acsdvt.org
Center/ School	Mary Hogan Preschool	3-5	School Year, M-Th 8:15-2:15	Yes	Middlebury	Kim Forbes, Preschool Director 802-382-1438 kforbes@acsdvt.org
Center	A.R.K. Child Care at Whiting	6 wks -5	Year Round, M-F, 7:30 -5	No	Whiting	Rebecca Kerr, Program Director 802-623-7991 arkchildcare2018@gmail.com



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- Dani Waters



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Center/ Home	Name	Ages	Schedule	PreK Partner	Town	Notes/Contact Info
Home	Muffy's Family Child Care and Preschool Progam	Infant-School age	Year Round, M-F, 8-4:30	Yes	Orwell	muffykgart@gmail.com 802-948-2561 (Leave message)
Home	Discovery Hill Child Care and Preschool	Infant-School age	Year Round, M-F, 7-4:30	Yes	Bristol	kidsfirstdhfcc@yahoo.com 802-989-1225
Home	Stacey Rheume	6 wks - 12	Year-Round, M-F 7-4:30	No	Salisbury	rrheume5@yahoo.com 802-349-5082
Center	Bridge School Beginners Preschool	3-5	Year Round, M-F, 8-3:30 with AfterCare until 4:30 during the school year	Yes	Middlebury	Lindsay Hard Director/Lead Teacher 802-388-3498 lindsay@bridgeschoolvermont. org
Center	Salisbury Family Center	6 wks-5	Year Round, M-F, 7:30-4:30	No	Salisbury	Christian Bowdish, Director salisburyfamilycenter@gmail.com 802-352-9800
Licensed Home	Pea Ridge Farm School	2.5-5	Year Round, M-F, 8-4		Middlebury	
Home	Anne Audy: Superhero Academy	Infant-School age	School Year, M-F, 7-5. Summer part-time only	No	Ferrisburgh	Anne.Emmel.Dunham@gmail.com (802)355-0506
Center	Red Clover Children's Center	Birth-3	Year Round, M-F	No	Middlebury	admin@redcloverchildren.org Redcloverchildren.org





The Addison County participants in the Early Childhood Leadership Institute this year were, left to right, Christine Birong-Smith, Jen Olson, Jackie Prime and Colleen Niering. With them on the far right is ECLI Co-Director Su White, who teaches children in Middlebury.

LOCAL TEACHERS BECOME LOCAL LEADERS

The Class of 2025 of the Early Childhood Leadership Institute at the Snelling Center for Government included an Addison County cohort of four education professionals.

ECLI is a dynamic program designed to cultivate the next generation of leaders in Early Childhood Education. ECLI 2025 brought together a group of 24 educators, policymakers, and community leaders from all over Vermont to collaborate on advancing Early Childhood Education.

Through these collaborations, networking with peers and participating in expert-led sessions, each member of the cohort gains actionable insights to drive positive change in their communities.



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WHAT CHILDREN NEED PHYSICALLY TO BE READY TO LEARN

Tasha Ball of the Willowell Foundation talks with Taryn Levy, who has been a physical therapist for 22 years, working in pediatrics for 20 years. She currently provides physical therapy services within the school system in and around Addison County.

Q: What brought you to this work?

A: I enjoy working with children because every day is different and they bring such joy into my life and the lives of those around them.

Q: Can you speak to the current trends in child development from your perspective as a physical therapist?

A: Times have changed. I believe that our children are missing essential parts of their development due to the excessive use of “containers” and screens for our babies. Many children are no longer following the typical sequence of sensory motor development. Kids are propped up in bouncy chairs, bumby seats and Exersaucers and are visually overstimulated by colorful, loud and flashing toys and screens. Children no longer spend large amounts of time on the floor, learning how their bodies move without gadgets to “entertain” them. We are disembodimenting our infants and young children, teaching them that the external world deserves more attention than how their body moves and feels. I believe this leads to increased states of dysregulation.

Our kids haven’t integrated their primary reflexes well, haven’t developed good core strength and have a limited base for postural stability. A limited foundation all around, really! Top that with the fact that as they get older, kids no longer do chores/shovel snow/walk a long distance/climb a tree ... all before school.

Our children are now arriving to school in bodies that are not prepared for seated learning.

However, all hope is not lost! We

can create environments and opportunities both inside and out of school that can fill in their foundations, help them integrate these primary reflexes and develop core strength. Giving more opportunity for movement and more time outside in unstructured play naturally encourages the building of foundational sensory motor skills and regulation.

In the meantime, while we are helping our children to fill in missing parts of their foundation, some children may need additional support during seated activities in order to hold their bodies up against gravity, pay attention and learn all at the same time. Their postural control is not yet automatic. If they are required to hold their body up in space as well as perform or engage in a cognitive task, something has to give! This may manifest as “behavior,” moving around and frequently changing positions, distraction, falling out of the chair or inability to pay attention.

Q: Tell us the difference between gross motor, fine motor, and sensory awareness? In what ways can caregivers assist or become more attuned to these?

A: Gross motor skills are the big movements you make with your large muscles such as rolling, crawling, running, jumping, etc. Fine motor skills follow the development of large motor skills. They are more refined using smaller muscles, requiring core strength and control to make small movements with your hands like grasping, picking up objects, manipulating small toys, drawing and writing. Sensory regulation is taking information in through the senses, interpreting that information and responding without over or under reacting. Caregivers can support the sequence of sensory motor development by creating or providing environments that encourage movement, exploration and various ways to interact within the space. Natural, outdoor environments organically provide these opportunities; however, indoor environments with large motor spaces and open-ended play can also encourage this type of developmentally appropriate play.

Q: How can caregivers help shift how we view and respond to young children in terms of development and body awareness?

A: Children need to move to learn. Quiet, alert time without distractions facilitates physical embodiment. Babies and young children that spend time on their tummies benefit from not only building core strength but the pairing of tactile, visual and proprioceptive sensory information to develop where their body is in space. Building upon that foundation, young children further develop their body and spatial

(See Physicality, Page 22)



“Children no longer spend large amounts of time on the floor, learning how their bodies move without gadgets to “entertain” them.”

— Taryn Levy

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Physicality

(Continued from Page 21)

awareness by moving their bodies in a large variety of ways, on lots of different surfaces and obstacles; crawling or climbing up, down over, under, around and through. And falling.

Q: I know you're a big advocate of caregivers not using "tools" or props for young children? Can you speak to why this is and what you suggest instead?

A: Often the use of containers, gadgets, toys or "tools" to entertain your child and make your life easier impedes typical development and could be considered "non-developmental time." We all need a safe place for our children to be while we attend to other tasks. But balancing that with time on the floor, engaging in developmentally appropriate play and movement, is essential. A doctor once told me, your baby can't fall off the floor. Creating a safe place on the floor where your baby can discover their hands, roll, airplane, push up on their hands, belly crawl, get on their hands and knees and then learn to sit builds the foundation they will need to develop higher level gross and fine motor skills. When your child is older, curious kids will find myriad ways to move their bodies using couch cushions, pillows, blankets, beds, trees, logs, sticks, hills and more.

Q: How does this work "pay off" in the long term? Are there ways the body development connects to learning or the mind later in life?

A: Following the typical sequence of sensory motor development and focusing on inchstones (all the very important steps in between the milestones) not just milestones, builds a strong foundation for the attainment of higher level skills. Children that follow the typical sequence of development and engage in developmentally appropriate play will more likely have stronger core muscles and a stronger, more automatic postural control system that allows them to engage in higher level fine motor and cognitive tasks. Improved postural control is related to improved focus and attention during cognitive tasks.

Q: Can you explain "risky play" and elaborate on the benefits or risks associated?

A: Best said by Angela Hanscom, occupational therapist: "We need to allow children to move in ways that make adults gasp. They need to swing daringly high. They need to go upside down. They need to spin in circles and fall on the ground." Risky play builds the areas of the brain associated with decision making and impulse control and may enhance that area of the brain for better decision making in adolescence. Allowing risky play helps children to trust themselves. On the other hand, forbidding risky play (telling children, "That's not safe," when in fact it may be) undermines children's trust in themselves and negatively impacts their decision-making skills.

Q: What are some action steps parents and caregivers can take in their own homes and lives to support age-appropriate sensory motor development?

A: Don't push higher level skills (for example, if your baby is not yet sitting, rather than practicing sitting, allow your child to engage in all the lower-level skills that lead to independent sitting).

Q: Allow your child to move in ways that put you on the nervous list. You can support them by asking questions like, "Do you feel safe? What would happen if you fell? What's your plan for getting down?"

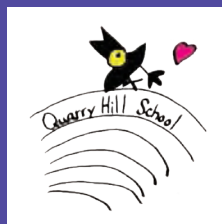
A: Get outside. Explore. Move. Play.



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RESOURCES FOR PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

• **“The Anxious Generation”** by Jonathan Haidt. With so much technology now it’s a great read.

• **Addison County Parent/Child Center** is a resource for parenting and for young children and adolescents. Social emotional and physical development and basic needs supports. We are also able to support prenatally and postpartum.

• **Cosmic Kids Yoga App** (great indoor gross motor option!) for children over 5.

• **“The Most Magnificent Thing”** by Ashley Spires, **“Not a Bo”** by Antoinette Portis, **“The Stick”** by Clay Rice – Children’s Books for open-ended and imaginative exploration.

• **“Janet Lansbury Unruffled”**– This is a podcast series on respectful parenting. Find it at tinyurl.com/ChildrenUnruffled.

• **Seed & Sew** – seedandsew.org – Great podcasts that address how to approach challenging behaviors in toddlers.

• **“Find Your Unicorn Space”** by Eve Rodsky – Helpful self-care book.

• **“We’re Always Told to Give Kids Choices-but here’s where it can backfire”** – article online at tinyurl.com/KidsChoicesBackfire.

• **“How to Maintain a Strong Parent-Child Bond While Juggling Work Responsibilities”** – article online at tinyurl.com/ChildAndWork.

• **Jennifercyrfamilychildcare.com** – Topics include toilet learning and new sibling arrival.

• **“But Why - A podcast for Curious Kids”** – It’s great for kids starting at age three/four and then through adulthood. Find it online at tinyurl.com/ButWhyJane.

• **“A Guide to Serve & Return”** from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University – find it online at tinyurl.com/TalkWithAChild.

• **“There’s No Such Thing As Bad Weather: A Scandinavian Mom’s Secrets for Raising Healthy, Resilient, and Confident Kids”** by Linda Åkeson McGurk.

• **“Circle Round”** podcast by WBUR shares stories from around the world and is great for all ages! It is free and works wonders on car rides or during dinner instead of a screen. Find it online at tinyurl.com/CircleRoundWBUR.

• **“Measles Toolkit”** from the Vermont Department of Health. Find it online at tinyurl.com/MeaslesToolkit.

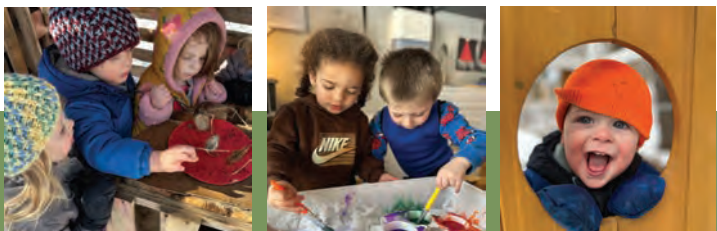
• **Minibury** is a website and newsletter that provides families with info about all things kid-related in Addison County. Discover local family-friendly activities, events, classes and educational experiences. Go online to minibury.com.



The Bristol Family Center is a nonprofit Early Care and Education program in Bristol, VT.

We serve 47 children ages 6 weeks to 6 years, and their families, throughout Addison County and beyond. The BFC operates as a full-time, year-round program.

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ALL ABOUT THE ADDISON EARLY CHILDHOOD REGIONAL COUNCIL

By DARLA SENECA

The Addison Early Childhood Regional Council is one of the 12 Early Childhood Regional Councils that make up the Building Bright Futures (BBF) Network, along with seven Vermont’s Early Childhood Action Plan Committees and Vermont’s Early Childhood State Advisory Council. Through this statewide network of over 500 early childhood partners, BBF works to improve the well-being of young children and families in Vermont.

The Addison Early Childhood Regional Council brings together community members who are committed to the young children and families of the Addison region. Guided by Vermont’s Early Childhood Action Plan, the Addison Regional Council identifies regional priorities based on community needs and gaps. The Council also advises the State Advisory Council on opportunities to strengthen local and statewide systems of care, health, and education.

The Addison Regional Council has identified the following two regional priorities to guide our work through 2026:

- Child and family mental health.
- Quality and capacity of early childhood education and services.

We envision an early childhood system where partners work together with a shared vision, shared action, and shared accountability; where regional tables are set for communities to problem-solve, coordinate, and take action; where data drives decision-making; and where sensible state policy is informed by the wisdom of communities. BBF operates using a collective impact framework, which allows us to tackle complex social and systemic problems facing Vermont’s children and families.

The needs are real and pressing, as demonstrated by the data on the Addison region that can be found in BBF’s recent publication “The State of Vermont’s Children: 2024 Year in Review.” This report includes a spotlight on the child welfare system, the 2025 Policy Recommendations of Vermont’s Early Childhood State Advisory Council Network, and a profile for each of Vermont’s 12 Building Bright Futures regions, which

align with the Agency of Human Services Districts. Below are some highlights from the section of the report focused on the Addison region. The full report can be found at bit.ly/StateofVermontsChildren2024.

- Our region includes 3,119 children under age 10.
- Thirty-four Addison-area children under age 13 are receiving supports for homelessness.
- The rate of full vaccination by age 2 for children in the Addison region is 82.5%.

• According to the Economic Policy Institute Family Budget Calculator, a family of four in Addison County needed to earn \$120,589 a year (or \$28.99 an hour) in 2023 “to attain a modest yet adequate standard of living.” Figures released after the publication of “The State of Vermont’s Children: 2024 Year in Review” show that the amount increased to \$131,368 per year for 2024.

The Addison Regional Council meets on the second Friday of each month from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon, either via Zoom or (for some of our spring and fall meetings) in person. We invite all community members to join us and share their input.

The Addison Regional Council is open to new members who are invested in the well-being of children and families. We are actively seeking representation from the following sectors: health, mental health, early care and education, primary education, home visiting, parents/caregivers, direct service providers, businesses/employers, and all others who are committed to participating in respectful, safe, and non-judgmental relationships to work together in support of positive outcomes for young children and families in our community.

To learn more about Building Bright Futures, please visit buildingbrightfutures.org. Please feel free to contact me (Darla Senecal, Building Bright Futures Regional Manager for the Addison, Rutland, and Bennington regions) at dsenecal@buildingbrightfutures.org if you have any questions.



READING TO YOUR CHILD

It's never too early to start

By MARITA SCHINE

Imagine a young dad, newborn baby resting comfortably on his chest while reading aloud from a news article. This dad took to heart that beginning to read to a child immediately, as often as possible, helps lay the groundwork for effective language use and literacy learning.

From birth, babies are hardwired to develop language skills, and consistent exposure to a wide variety of language patterns is what helps them do exactly that. Snuggling up with a book, talking, and having fun with words and pictures also helps children develop emotional awareness and empathy, and learn how to handle challenging feelings.

In addition, the physical experience of exploring a book with another person nearby by touching, mouthing, and manipulating it supports babies' overall cognitive development. Infants learn to turn pages as early as six months. Often babies pay attention to the printed page by one year, can actively follow an adult's pointing finger and lift flaps, touch pages with intention, absorb vocabulary words, and anticipate the next page — all early literacy skills that are built upon during preschool years and later, when children learn to read at school.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was born from a dream that all children should have access to books in the home and build a strong foundation of early literacy skills. As Dolly Parton says, "The seeds of (these) dreams are often found in books and the seeds you help plant in your community can grow across the world."

Since 2008, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has been delivering high-quality books to Addison County children from birth to age five. The books are free, sent to the child once a month by mail and theirs to keep. The program promotes equity — enabling all registered families to build home libraries for their children. Imagination Library books celebrate diversity and include some bilingual (Spanish/English) titles, title-specific reading tips to promote ownership and inclusion, and some Braille and audio books accessible on the Imagination Library website. It is sponsored locally by **Addison County Readers**, an all-volunteer organization focused on promoting early literacy in our county.

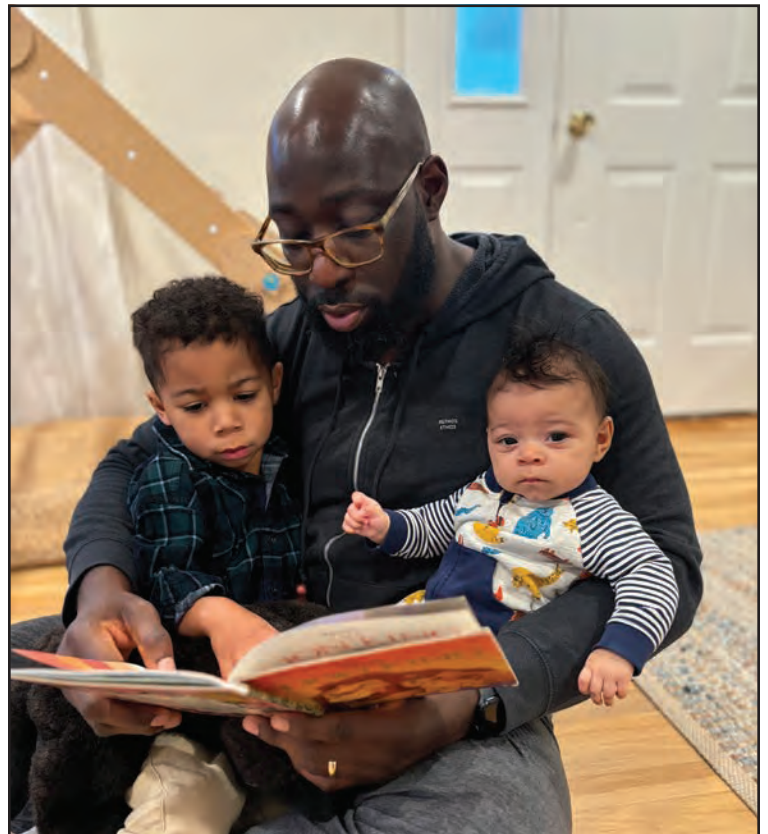
In addition to sponsoring the Imagination Library, Addison County Readers supports **Books at Birth** in partnership with Porter Birthing Center, providing newborns with a free rhyming book and the opportunity to sign up for the Imagination Library. Last year, approximately 130 newborns started life with the Imagination Library. Newborns enrolled will have received about 60 books for their home library by their fifth birthday. Local author and illustrator Ashley Wolff is an early literacy ambassador.

"I am in favor of all books, reading in all places, all the time," Wolff says. "The Imagination Library makes this possible."

This year, Addison County Readers started an early literacy grants initiative for county childcare and preschool programs, awarding over \$5,000 to a dozen applicants working in Addison County preschools, and early childhood education settings, to promote early literacy, support early childhood educators, and put a wealth of enriching and diverse books into the hands of kids.

We encourage parents with young children to connect with us on social media or via our website, at addisoncountyreaders.org. Please, sign up for the Imagination Library today to grow your child's home library, and tell your friends with young children!

As often as you can, snuggle up with a book, rhyme, sing, and have fun!



FAMILY HOME CHILDCARE: A wonderful fit for some families

By HEATHER ARMELL

There are many options for childcare and for each family it is a personal choice. I myself run a registered home childcare, which many refer to as a family home childcare. I have six wonderful children that come to my home to learn and have fun during the week so that their families may go to work in our community.

Each morning as the families bring their children, I greet them at the door. I enjoy observing how each individual child comes in since they are all unique. Some come in wanting to show me something, some just want to sit down to eat while another may need to snuggle for a bit for that transition time. Some families like to chat for a while, while others may be doing a fast drop off as they need to get to work.

By being a small home with six children, I get to know the families and these children on a personal level. We have a special bond that makes them feel like an extended family. A family I have in my care says, "Heather makes home childcare feel like I am leaving my daughter with her aunt and cousins every day. There is a lovely schedule but she makes the kids feel like they are home, small and personalized to each child's needs."

Another family says, "We enjoy your home daycare because the kids get to actually be kids. If they want snuggles, you give them, if they want to wear pj's you allow them to, if they want to roll in the mud and be wild outside you completely allow that. But you also keep family transitions alive, like doing presents under the tree, which was absolutely amazing to us and how you treat each child as your own kid."

As a family childcare owner, I have a mixed age group, which I

(See Family home childcare, Page 28)



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NEW CHILDCARE SPOTS OPENING IN COUNTY

By JOHN FLOWERS

ADDISON COUNTY — Securing a childcare spot can still be a daunting proposition for new parents and recent transplants, as local centers are pretty much full and compiling waiting lists.

But that could soon change.

The recent launch of the Red Clover Children's Center, a major expansion of the Otter Creek Child Center (OCCC), and planned growth at the Mary Johnson Children's Center (MJCC) are justifying new hope and peace of mind for Addison County parents.

In addition, The Growing Tree is a new, center-based program that will soon provide full-day, full-year preschool at the former Addison Central School building, according to Building Bright Futures. Last fall, BBF provided The Growing Tree funding that will support startup costs, helping to create 20 spots for children from age 32 months to 5 years.

The portend of new slots is on vivid display at 150 Weybridge St. in Middlebury, where construction crews are working diligently on a project that will eventually allow OCCC to accommodate 77 additional children.

"Everything is on track to be completed in early October," OCCC Executive Director Linda January said of the project.

Subcontractors are getting ready to install plumbing, HVAC and electrical work inside the new, ADA-compliant addition, she added. In the meantime, OCCC will continue to serve 71 children off-site, at the

College Street Children's Center and the Inn on the Green, currently owned by Middlebury College — a major partner and financial sponsor of the Otter Creek center's expansion effort.

Meanwhile, growth plans are also on the drawing board at MJCC, one of the oldest (1970) continuously operating childcare centers in Vermont. MJCC now serves 105 children, ages three months to 5 years, at its main campus (81 Water St., Middlebury), Mary Hogan Elementary School, the cooperative nursery school in 391 East Main St. in East Middlebury, and at Orwell Village School.

Executive Director Kristen Dunne said MJCC last fall added a new toddler room at its East Middlebury location and is considering a new infant space that would be added onto the Barrera Building at the center's 81 Water St. campus.

Further fueling local childcare optimism was the opening in January of 2024 of the Red Clover Children's Center that's based in the Congregational Church of Middlebury. The center and its eight full-time educators serve 24 children ranging in age from six weeks through three years.

Red Clover Executive Director Tessa Dearborn said the center has no plans at this point to expand, but the demand is certainly there. She confirmed a waiting list of 163. Dearborn stressed admissions aren't necessarily predicated on first-come first-served, as children are divided into different age groups. For example, while the center at a given time might not have a vacancy for an infant, it might have capacity to serve a three-year-old for a short while until that child transitions to a preschool.

And clearly there is momentum to keep growing centers. Last week the organization First Children's Finance VT announced that another Addison County Early Child Education center would be getting a Make Way for Kids Infant/Toddler Capacity Building Grant. These grants support Vermont's early childhood entrepreneurs in addressing the state's critical need for high-quality, affordable childcare — last year supporting the creation of more than 750 childcare slots and 225 new jobs across Vermont.

In the latest round of grants, 22 projects in nine counties were awarded a total of \$543,000. Among them was the Starksboro Cooperative Preschool.



A MAJOR EXPANSION of Otter Creek Child Center in Middlebury is adding space for 77 new childcare spots at the Weybridge Street center. The 13,000-square-foot expansion, shown swathed in green, is due to be completed this fall.

Family home childcare

(Continued from page 26)

personally find incredible. The children have a chance to teach each other and be leaders as they grow older. They learn empathy and compassion while they are interacting every day.

Another family said “When my child is older, I want her to learn to be kind to her younger peers, and to be a role model to them as well.” This happens all the time. The two- and three-year-olds are so quick to offer a hug if someone gets hurt or is feeling sad. While they do this, the one-year-old is starting to do this as well. There is nothing better than children being role models for each other.

“I think that kids learn best from high-quality interactions with caregivers and other kids,” another family says. She also said, “If I were financially able, I’d be at home with her myself, so I wanted to mimic that experience as much as possible and have her in a safe, loving home with someone who cares for her the same way I would in my own home.” These families are all so amazing and we work together to help these children grow and learn in their early years, which are the most important years for growing and learning.

As a family home childcare, not only am I close with the families and children but they are able to build relationships with each other as well since we have a small group. They all know each other. We get together outside of childcare hours such as going out apple picking together every year or to a family farm then having a big lunch together.

This gives them all time to talk and get to know each other and the kids love having extra days to play. These families share secondhand items when they are able. And most recently I saw such kindness when

one of these families had a newborn arrive. One family made their baby a blanket and got them a stuffed animal while another made them a meal. This doesn’t just happen anywhere. It is because we are a small extended family. I am happy to be able to provide for these families and children, and I couldn’t see myself doing any other job.

For me, family childcare gives children the opportunity to bond with their teacher through the many years they have together. The teacher is also able to build close relationships with families since they see the families at drop off and pick up times. Something personal to my childcare is that I have a website where pictures are posted for families daily, which helps the families to know what goes on during the day.

So, if you are beginning your search for childcare, I highly recommend a family home childcare. Visit those providers and ask questions. See what they offer and, if you can, talk to some other families about their experiences. Family childcare is a wonderful beginning to your child’s early learning experiences. Happy Week of the Young Child! The children are the future.



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STABILIZING AND BUILDING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSION IN VERMONT

By JEN OLSON, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR
WREN’S NEST FOREST PRESCHOOL

I am proud to be a Vermonter. There are a host of reasons I feel that way as of late. One is rooted in the work of our early childhood educators, who have advocated for professional recognition here in Vermont because this is what’s best for children, families and educators.

In 2023, the legislature passed Act 76. Over the past year, as the elements of this new law have rolled out, we’ve already seen more than 1,000 new spaces open in childcare programs and we’ve seen the sticker cost of early childhood education become far more affordable for many families. As the sector has stabilized, we’ve seen programs expand and invest in wage increases and benefits for their teachers — a historically underpaid workforce.

The public investment of Act 76 paves the way for greater accountability from early childhood educators themselves. We are the ones who spend all day with our state’s youngest children as their brains are developing most rapidly. What we do to help them learn and grow sets the foundation for the rest of their lives. But as a workforce, we’ve never been individually regulated, we’ve never had clear career pathways, and families and hiring programs have never had a clear way to understand our qualifications. All that may change, and that’s so good for children.

In January 2025, Vermont’s Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) recommended to the Vermont legislature that our state create an Early Childhood Education profession with a license to practice.

OPR’s recommendations are rooted in those made by Vermont’s early childhood educators. Since 2019 I’ve been part of a task force convened by the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children’s to engage thousands of my fellow early childhood educators in a consensus process about professionalization.

OPR’s recommendation recognizes the knowledge and expertise that early childhood educators have about child development and best practices in their classrooms. Licensure creates career opportunities and security for educators while it also creates consistent qualifications and transparency for the public. This means more qualified teachers who will stay in their jobs!

I appreciate that OPR recommended plenty of transition time for our workforce to adapt. As written, the recommendations will retain current educators and prevent program closures.

I’ve observed firsthand the remarkable commitment and critical thinking that educators have brought forth to engage in a grassroots movement to professionalize, motivated by what’s best for young children. It’s a great privilege to participate in this workforce-led initiative; and the work of advocacy is never done! I am continually grateful and appreciative of the insight, inquiry and reflection that has been championed by early childhood educators across Vermont. As the legislative session moves forward, a bill has been introduced to create an ECE profession with a license to practice and I’m hopeful that Vermont’s legislators will support it.



GIVE WIC TO YOUR FAMILY

WIC stands for Women Infants and Children. It is a program that helps pregnant women, breastfeeding women, infants, and children younger than 5 years old enjoy healthier lives through nutrition, education, and support.

Families participating in WIC can buy healthy foods each month using a WIC EBT card at WIC-approved grocery stores. WIC foods include fruits and vegetables, cheese, milk, yogurt, eggs, breakfast cereal, whole grains, beans, peanut butter, and infant foods. These foods are expanding to offer more choice and flexibility.

WIC is for income-eligible Vermont residents who are pregnant or have just had a baby, and children up to age 5. Parents, grandparents, foster parents, and legal guardians can apply on behalf of their children. Individuals are automatically income-eligible if they participate in Medicaid/Dr. Dynasuar health insurance and/or 3SquaresVT.

In addition to monthly food benefits, WIC provides nutrition education, infant feeding support, helpful referrals, and more! For example, in the summer, WIC families can receive coupons for fresh, local fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers markets and farm stands.

Learn more about this program online at tinyurl.com/WICinVT.



TEACHER PROFILE:

Dani Forand

Bristol Family Center

I can still remember singing the song “You Are My Sunshine” while standing in front of the crowd with my best friend at our preschool graduation. I can remember the oval table that I sat at with my first friends at lunch. I can remember the way the paint smelled. I remember my symbol was the bunny that got drawn on each piece of art that I made. The art that got sent home and stored away for the last 23 years in my mom’s closet as some of her earliest memories of my childhood days.

Preschool days were some of my favorite days.

And now, being an early educator is one of the most rewarding things I have done in my life. Hearing the kids yell, “Dani!” as I walk into the classroom each morning makes me happy. Seeing the smiles on the kids’ faces after they finally accomplish something they’ve been working so hard to learn, makes me happy. Learning and teaching through play, side by side with the children, makes me happy.

As a first-generation college graduate, I know my early learning experiences mattered and are the foundation of both my educational and professional success. I see the children in my classroom learning,

growing, and creating memories; knowing that this serves as that same foundation that I had.

Each child in my preschool classroom has spent the last couple months deepening their understanding of themselves, their families, and the world around them. They’ve talked about who they love and what they love. They’ve drawn self and family portraits, noticing how many people were in each other’s families, their similarities, and their differences. They’ve learned how many letters are in their names and are working on being able to write it without any help.

As we continue, we’re going to learn more about our favorites. Each week the children bring in a show and tell, typically a favorite item that they have from home and share it with their peers. We’re beginning to make some of our favorite foods while taking advantage of the math opportunities that come with it like scooping, measuring and pouring ingredients. Every day is an opportunity to read favorite books, sing favorite songs, and dance along to our favorite music.

The learning that they are doing in my classroom is so critical to all their learning that will follow. As I watch them grow, I can only hope that they remember their preschool days the way I do. That these days truly serve as a foundation for a love of learning, of success, and of joy.



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U.S. MEASLES CASES ARE RISING: Make sure your family is protected

In the first few months of 2025, there have been multiple outbreaks of measles with deaths reported in other parts of North America. Notably, there is an ongoing outbreak of measles in Quebec. As of late March, the CDC has reported 378 cases nationwide, with one-third of those among children age 5 and younger. Most cases have been in children and teens who are unvaccinated against measles. In all of 2024, the U.S. saw 285 case of measles.

Measles is not just a little rash. Measles is a highly contagious respiratory virus that can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children. Some may suffer from severe complications, such as pneumonia (infection of the lungs) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). Around 1 to 3 of every 1,000 children who become infected with measles will die from respiratory and neurologic complications.

Measles is almost entirely preventable with vaccines. While most people in the U.S. and Vermont are vaccinated against measles, communities with lower vaccine coverage are at higher risk for outbreaks. Vaccinating your family protects other children from measles who can't get vaccinated because they are too young or have medical conditions. Being vaccinated against measles is your best defense against measles.

Here's how you can help keep your family, school, and community healthy:

1. Make sure you and your family are vaccinated against measles — especially if you plan to travel outside of the U.S. Measles is still common in many parts of the world. Every year, measles is brought into the U.S. by unvaccinated travelers who get measles while they are in other countries.

- Children should get two doses of measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine—the first dose at 12-15 months and the second dose at 4-6 years.

- Babies 6-11 months old who are traveling internationally should get an early dose of the MMR vaccine at least two weeks before travel.

2. If your child is sick with measles symptoms, stay home and call your doctor.

- Symptoms usually start with a high fever, then a cough, runny nose, and red and watery eyes. A rash usually appears three to five days after the first symptoms.

- If you do not have a health care provider, call 2-1-1 to be connected to care.

- If you suspect measles, make sure to **call before** going to a doctor's office, the hospital, or a clinic to let them know about symptoms. Because the virus is so contagious, the office will need to take precautions before you arrive.

- While there is no treatment for measles, your doctor will have the best guidance on how to care for a child with measles.

For more information on measles and vaccines, visit HealthVermont.gov/measles.

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*Stay in the Loop with MiniBury:
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For more than a decade, MiniBury has been the go-to source of local information for folks raising children in Addison County. Parents and caregivers rely on MiniBury to give them the latest scoop on local family-friendly events, playgroups and storytimes, after-school programs and summer camps.

The most-visited page on MiniBury.com is the events calendar, which is updated regularly and includes recurring events such as playgroups, story times, after-school drop-in programs, open gyms, plus all the special family-friendly events that make our community such a great place to raise kids. Check it out!



Did you know MiniBury sends out a weekly email newsletter — and that it was named the No. 1 Outstanding Newsletter by the New England Newspaper and Press Association in 2021?

Each newsletter is packed with the latest news that local parents and caregivers can use, plus a little heartfelt, sometimes silly, intro from MiniBury's Megan James about life as a parent in our little corner of Vermont.

Sign up at minibury.com/sign-up-for-our-e-newsletter or scan the QR code!



Follow MiniBury on Instagram and Facebook to keep tabs on all things baby and kid-related in Addison County. We post alerts when summer camp and after-school program registrations open, when playgroups are canceled, or when Junebug is clearing out its winter gear. Our most popular posts are the events roundups we publish every Thursday morning so you can plan your weekend.

