



“Working together to create a better future for children and their families.”

Clay County Early Childhood Initiative

Friday, January 15, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Members present: Teresa Haider, Safe Kids; Marianne Smith, Child Care Aware; Jenna Kahly, Clay County Commissioner/Lake Agassiz Library; Julie Klier, Clay County; Ashley Nelson, Moorhead Public School; Alicia Bauman, Child Care Aware; Lacey Hoppe, MSUM Early Learning Center; Kay Heinrich, Trinity Preschool; Shanna Grefsrud, Head Start; Carolyn Strnad, Coordinator; Guest: Dave Kemper, Friends of the Children;

Carolyn welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Presentation: Friends of the Children, David Kemper.

Dave shared the following information of Friends of the Children:

- Community members formed a chapter of Friends of the Children in the Fargo/Moorhead area eighteen months ago.
- The program is a professional mentoring program for ages 4- 6 that works with a child and his/her family until graduation from school. Each friend has eight children on their caseload. The program is currently serving thirty-two children.
- The organization is presently working with CAPLP, Moorhead Public Schools, and Churches United for the Homeless. These are typically children and families that fall through the cracks. Not able to manage on their own but no high enough needs to qualify for services. Often the child is in foster care or at risk of being placed in foster care.
- Friends spend two hours a week with the child at school and two hours in their home. They also assist families in accessing community resources they may need.
- A short video on Friends of the Children: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqtPs2hfRF4&feature=emb_logo
- Friends of the Children is a two-generational approach that is individualized, evidence-based, and trauma-informed.
- Funding for the program is through donations and grant funding. A recent contribution to the program allowed the organization to buy Christmas gifts for the children and families.
- “Friends” need to have some experience of working with children. Some have a background in social services or education.
- The next step for the program will be to hire two more Friends. Once that happens, they will employ a family support coordinator that will work with families. Job openings are listed on Indeed, Instagram, and Facebook.
- The ECI can help by advocating for the program, sharing information on the program, and continuing to support families.

Contact information: **David Kemper** | Program Director | 701-219-4899 friendsFargoMoorhead.org

Agency Updates:

Safe Kids has opened its second safety shop in the basement of the Southwest Sanford pediatric clinic. They are in the process of hiring new educators. Outreach packets for parents on parenting are in the process of being developed. The agency is applying for a medical safety grant for educational presentations on medication safety to pharmacies and students.

Child Care Aware has started a new Parent Aware cohort. It continues to be a popular program among providers. The staff has been contacting every provider in the area to connect with them on their training needs for licensing, the saliva COVID testing information, and the supply link. Information on programs and upcoming training is located on their Facebook.

Natural Playground and biking park is in fundraising mode. You can find updates on the park development on their Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/FmNaturalPlayground/>

Moorhead Public Schools: Kindergarten registration will be March 1. The date has been pushed back due to an update to student data systems. Currently, Early Intervention is serving 244 children from birth through kindergarten. Referrals are lower than in previous years. They are receiving a handful of Help Me Grow referrals from clinics. January 18, 2021, is a staff training day. This year's focus is on cultural diversity.

Trinity Preschool received a four-star rating. Due to this rating, funds will be used to purchase vinyl mats and multi-cultural resources for teachers and classrooms. The preschool recently received a donation that was funneled through the Dakota Medical Foundation that, in turn, will allow the program to participate in Giving Hearts Day. Funds donated were used to purchase furniture and an iPad. Sparklers, a church organization at Trinity Lutheran Church, have also donated funds to the program.

MSUM Early Learning Center also received its four-star Parent Aware rating. Lacey is working on how she plans to utilize the funds that came along with the rating. She is looking at playground equipment and dramatic play. Current enrollment is down due to COVID, but Lacey is seeing some interest in registering children.

Jenna Kahly – no county report at this time. Library news. The Moorhead City Council started the process by submitting a request to the state to utilize a local sales tax to develop a library/community center.

Head Start once again has children back in the classroom. Half of the students are being served in the classroom, and half are being served virtually. Home visiting programs are being offered virtually at this time. The Vita Tax Site, a free tax service for low-income people, is looking for volunteers. CAPLP will be offering financial fit classes.

Next meeting: February 19, 2021

Clay County Early Childhood Initiative 2021 Work Plan

Goal #1: Increase awareness of the importance of quality early childhood experiences

Goal #2: Continue to build a strong early childhood coalition in Clay County.

Goal #3: Meaningful parent outreach that includes skill-building in parenting, promoting reading, and support healthy social and emotional development

Goal #4: Support Child Care Providers to retain current providers and recruit new providers.