Child Care Works for Somerset

A CAMPAIGN TO STRENGTHEN SOMERSET’S ECONOMY THROUGH INCREASED ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE

BUSINESSES RELY ON EMPLOYEES. EMPLOYEES RELY ON CHILD CARE.

A robust economy is grounded in a strong business community. Just as successful employers depend on the productivity of their employees, workers with young children depend on access to reliable child care. Moms and dads cannot enter the workforce, complete training, or remain on the job without it, according to a 2019 report from the Council for Strong America, “Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis.” In fact, a 2020 report from the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center identified child care—second only to transportation—as a major barrier to Pennsylvania’s ability to grow and support a strong workforce.

SOMERSET COUNTY IS A CHILD CARE “DESERT.”

Somerset County is severely underserved when it comes to child care options for working families. County-wide there were 2,560 children under age 5 that needed care in 2020. The maximum number of available child care slots at 1,341 doesn’t come close. Plus, the county lost four child care programs and 70 slots since March 2020 due to COVID-19. Programs still operating have been unable to return to full enrollment due to pandemic requirements and staffing difficulties.

Availability isn’t the only obstacle working families encounter. By PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning standards, Somerset County had no high-quality child care providers—zero. Until now. In 2021, The Learning Lamp Center for Children in Somerset became the first center to earn a Keystone STAR 4 rating. We’re asking for your help to expand quality care for double the number of children we currently serve.

The Learning Lamp Center for Children in Somerset is first in county to earn a STAR 4.

STAR 4 demonstrates a center has met performance standards, ensuring children are served in a high-quality setting by trained staff, with committed leaders who care about the families they serve.

SOMERSET COUNTY EARLY LEARNING FACTS

Sources: StartStrongPA.org 2020 Somerset County Profile; KIDS COUNT: PA Partnerships for Children; PA Department of Human Services COMPASS

27 CENTER, FAMILY, AND GROUP CHILD CARE PROVIDERS WITH MAXIMUM CAPACITY OF 1,341 CHILDREN

4 CHILD CARE PROVIDERS CLOSED SINCE MARCH 2020 (LOSS OF 70 SLOTS)

2,560 CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5 ARE IN NEED OF CHILD CARE COUNTYWIDE

1,220 CHILDREN ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

92% OF CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY WENT UNSERVED IN 2020

3 OF 4 CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED PRESCHOOL WENT UNSERVED IN 2020
YOUR INVESTMENT IN CHILD CARE STRENGTHENS SOMERSET’S WORKFORCE—TODAY AND TOMORROW.

Pre-pandemic, Pennsylvania lost $3.5 billion annually due to breakdowns in childcare, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. That figure represents lost tax revenue and productivity related to missed work and employee turnover. Child care is a driver of the local economy.

Not only is The Learning Lamp the 25th largest employer in Somerset County, according to PA Department of Labor and Industry, our Somerset center provides care for employees of 20 of the county’s top 50 employers. It serves employees of 104 unique businesses overall. When working families access quality child care, parents can seek and retain employment, participate in training opportunities, and increase wages through advancement. And, when children attend high-quality early learning programs, they are less likely to need special education, drop out of school, become a teen parent, or be arrested. What’s more, statistics tell us children who attend quality early learning programs are healthier, earn higher incomes, and pay more taxes as adults.

HERE’S HOW YOUR INVESTMENT WILL BE USED.

The Learning Lamp is committed to increasing access to high-quality child care in Somerset County. Support of forward-thinking community partners like you is critical to making this happen. We’re investing in the renovation of a centrally located facility in Somerset. The result will be a bright, clean child care space that serves double the number of children—making it possible for more people to go to work and stay on the job in Somerset County.

The center, near Maple Ridge Elementary, will be transformed through new classrooms, the addition of natural light, and space for children to run and play. Phased renovations will convert outdated, unusable space into new, brightly lit classrooms and gross motor play areas. Improvements will increase safety, improve child supervision, and expand number of bathrooms better suited to the size of small children. Exterior renovations will replace a deteriorated plywood ramp entrance, upgrade exits, and add windows to maximize lighting throughout the building. Parking and green space areas will also receive much-needed attention.

TOGETHER, WE LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE OF SOMERSET’S WORKERS AND THEIR CHILDREN.

Having purchased the building in 2020 with the help of low-interest loans, The Learning Lamp has worked with CME Engineering to map out $700,000 in strategic improvements that will enable the center to expand enrollment and provide more working families with the reliable care they need to seek and retain employment. Ultimately, the center will accommodate more than double the number of children we currently serve, increasing full capacity to 134. With more children to serve comes the need for new staff—27 new jobs in all.

ARE YOU READY TO MAKE CHILD CARE WORK FOR BUSINESS IN SOMERSET COUNTY? THE LEARNING LAMP IS. PLEASE, WON’T YOU JOIN US?