

Thunder Hawk Care

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Montevideo School District
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“The infant program would lose \$50,000 each year without the income from the fees paid by older children. To break even as an individual program, the infant care would cost \$320/week per infant enrolled in the program.”

- Trisha Lein, Coordinator at Sanford Education Center

Primary Contact

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Background

Development & Preparation

Thunder Hawks began as a private non-profit called Kinder Kare, Inc. that was incorporated in 1969 as a community project to address the need for childcare in Montevideo. Throughout the years, the location of the program changed frequently, until 2011, when the program was moved to one of the elementary schools in town. The current superintendent of the Montevideo schools, Dr. Luther Heller, has been extremely supportive of early childhood education and was enthusiastic about Kinder Kare moving into the elementary school building.

During the years of 2011 through 2016, the program rented the classrooms it used from the school district. At first, they rented with two preschool classrooms, then added a toddler classroom, and lastly an infant classroom. By 2016, Kinder Kare was no longer able to charge high enough tuition to sustain the program after Chippewa County withdrew its financial contribution from the program.



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Due to this, Kinder Kare made the decision to join the school district's pre-existing school-age childcare program. The income from the district's school-age program is enough to make the expensive infant childcare program sustainable.

As of July 1, 2016, the staff that worked at Kinder Kare transitioned to full-time employees of the Montevideo School District, and the preschool, toddler, and infant programs continued operating as they had before, but under the school district as Thunder Hawk Care, and with a new DHS license. Also, for the first time ever, staff received benefits like health and dental insurance, and retirement. This had a positive impact on Thunder Hawk Care's ability to find and retain quality staff.

Established

Thunder Hawk Care began July 1, 2016

Food

Thunder Hawk Care uses multiple food programs to keep costs down. During the school year, children ages 12 months and older use the school lunch program for breakfast and lunch and have lunch accounts through the school district. Breakfast is free for all children and lunch is \$2.15 each, unless the child qualifies for free or reduced lunch, in which case the meal is free (whether the child qualified for free lunch or reduced lunch).

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funds are used for food for infants under 12 months and for afternoon snacks for all children.

In the summer, the Montevideo area qualifies for the Free Summer Food Service Program, so Thunder Hawk Care host that program in the elementary school building and all Thunder Hawk Care children (infant through school-age) receive free breakfast and lunch through that program. Again, CACFP funds are used for snacks in the summer, and for infants under 12 months.

Building Information

Thunder Hawk Care operates in the Montevideo Elementary School and uses its two playgrounds as well. The building is owned by Montevideo Public Schools and Thunder Hawk Care does not pay rent.

Enrollment

There are 253 children enrolled at Thunder Hawk Care. The infant and toddler programs are DHS licensed. The preschool and school age programs are not DHS licensed but they are certified by DHS. These families heard about Thunder Hawk Care through word of mouth, social media advertising, community education brochures, and school flyers. Thunder Hawk Care is licensed for:

Age Range	Number of Children
6 weeks to 16 months	12
16 months to 33 months	21
33 months to kindergarten	60
Kindergarten to 12 years	150



Schedule

Thunder Hawk Care is open from 5:45 a.m. until 5:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. They are not open on weekends or holidays.

Fees

The current rates at Thunder Hawk Care are shown below. For the School Age Program - \$6.00 covers them for 1 session, a session is either before school (5:45 AM - school starts) or after school (from the time school ends until 5:45 PM). If they come BOTH before AND after school it would cost \$12.00 per day. They can mix and match mornings and afternoons so everyone has a different contract.

Age Range	Cost
6 weeks to 16 months	\$165/week
16 months to 33 months	\$140/week (\$28/day)
33 months to kindergarten	\$130/week (\$26/day or \$16/half-day)
Kindergarten to 12 years (Before/After School)	\$30/week (\$6/day)
Kindergarten to 12 years (All-Day Care)	\$110/week (\$22/day or \$12/half-day)

Staff

Currently, Thunder Hawk Care employs 15 full-time staff and 18 part-time staff. The Montevideo School District employ these staff members.

Financing

Operating Budget

Annual Operating Revenue	Amount
CACFP – Federal Food Program in Child Care Center	\$8,478
Annual Child Care Center Revenue (infant – 12 years)	\$521,870
Special Education Tax Levies	\$13,000
United Way Funding	\$3,500
Individual Donations	\$177
Montevideo Economic Development Administration (for infant care)	\$10,000
Fundraisers	\$3,500
TOTAL	\$560,525
Annual Operating Expenses	Amount
Space Rental	In-Kind
Staff Positions	\$417,450
FICA/PERA/TRA/Medical Insurance	\$90,456
Training	\$5,664
Food	\$17,620
Supplies	\$20,582
Dues/Memberships/Licenses	\$8,529
Miscellaneous (special onetime expense, buses for field trips)	\$2,536
TOTAL	\$562,837
loss	-\$2,312

This operating budget is from April 2018



Operating Budget Notes

The infant program would lose \$50,000 per year without the income from the fees paid by older children. To break even as an individual program, the infant care program would have to charge \$320/week per infant enrolled in the program.

The Special Education Tax Levies are there to help sustain staffing for children with special needs in the school-age program. The tax levies that are used to help sustain staffing for students with special care needs can only be utilized in the school age program - these levies are not available for children under the age of Kindergarten (must be actively enrolled in Kindergarten to utilize the levies dollars in school age child care).

The United Way Funding comes from the local United Way chapter to support the program and Thunder Hawk Care applies for these funds annually. United Way funding varies slightly from year to year depending on the amount raised within the community - and we receive it in two different checks, one at the beginning of the year and one at the end of the year.

Challenges and Successes

Biggest Challenge

The biggest challenge for Thunder Hawk Care is finding and keeping qualified staffing and funding sources.

Greatest Success

Thunder Hawk Care's greatest success has been joining with the school district for stability and leadership.

