



# Whistle Stop Learning Center

Thompsonville Child Care Center



# Who is Ashley Lindstrom?



- Benzie Central Graduate of 2011
- Central Michigan University graduate of 2016
  - Degree in Early Childhood Development
  - Teaching certificates in Early Childhood Special Education & Elementary Education
- Worked as Assistant Director of child care center before teaching
- Taught for last 5 years/last 2 years at Benzie Central

Contact Ashley:

231-383-0965

[ashley@whistlestoplearningcenter.com](mailto:ashley@whistlestoplearningcenter.com)

# My why...

I know first hand the struggle to find reliable, affordable and quality child care in the local area.

- ❖ Multiple waitlists for 9+ months
- ❖ We drive 60 extra miles per day
- ❖ Half of my bring home income goes to child care expenses
- ❖ Make a positive impact on the community that helped raise me
- ❖ Provide support & relief to families who are in need of safe and reliable care for their children



# The local impact

## Benzie County statistics:

- Benzie County has two child care centers - Frankfort & Lake Ann
- Benzie County has 4 in home child cares around the Benzonia/Honor area
- Both child care centers have a cost of \$250 or more for a full time infant/toddler slot (under 2.5) and \$220 for preschool.
- There are approximately 120 child care slots in Benzie County, 250 slots including preschool/after school programming. However, according to the US Census, there are over 700 children under the age of 5.

# The local impact

- Key challenges in the region have been noted as provider decline and scarcity, accessibility and affordability.
- In 2018 only 1 in 3 infants and toddlers in the region had a slot available through an Early Childhood provider.
- As of 2021 in a 5 county region in NW Michigan there was a lack of over 700 slots available for children.

# When Opportunity Knocks



March 2022 - my husband and I purchased a commercial building in town Thompsonville, it is a perfect small parcel with an existing building that is designed almost PERFECTLY for a child care center.

3 large rooms, storage room, office, kitchen, 2 large bathrooms and a large backyard.

Intending on becoming a nonprofit organization in 2023, for now we are partnered with United Way to accept donations and apply for grants.

# Vision for Whistle Stop aside from the child care

- ❖ To connect families to local area resources they may be in need of
- ❖ Sponsor a local baby pantry in the SE corner of Benzie County/NE corner of Manistee County
- ❖ Host community events/family engagement events
- ❖ Host “parents night out” events
- ❖ Work with local businesses to allow children to learn about their community and opportunities within it

# Facts about Whistle Stop

- License Capacity of 50 (could be up to 64)
  - 12 infant/toddlers (under 2.5)
  - 20 tuition preschool (3 year old & 4 year old)
  - 15 school age slots for before & after school, summer care
- Have considered splitting some preschool slots with NMCAA for low income families
  - Closure of Platte River location
  - Potential for less preschool slots at Crystal Lake
  - Only one classroom for preschool available at Betsie Valley
  - No tuition based options unless going to Lake Ann
- Regular attendance of around 35 children daily



# Facts about Whistle Stop

- Center opening slated for September 2022
- Center Hours intended to be 6:30am-6:00pm Monday thru Friday
- Staffing Needs
  - Will need 5-6 full time staff
  - 5-6 part time/on call staff members
- Will be licensed through the State of Michigan and Great Start to Quality star rated (child care rating system)
- Will accept child care subsidy (low income state assistance for child care)
- Will be a part of the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program

# What steps have already been taken?

- ❖ Fire marshall approval, upon completion of renovations
- ❖ State licensing approval, upon completion of renovations
- ❖ Local zoning approval, once granted state license
- ❖ Quotes obtained for all necessary renovations
- ❖ Beginning the demolition of existing non-compliant spaces
- ❖ Community support through Facebook, [UpNorthLive article](#), and article in Northern Michigan Women's Magazine (coming in May)
- ❖ Attending local meetings to spread awareness (Advocates for Benzie County, Benzie Sunrise Rotary, Weldon Township, Village of Thompsonville, Betsie Valley Community Center, Grow Benzie, Benzie 0-6 Workgroup)

# So now what?

Now the hard work begins. We need funds to help get the building renovated, up to fire code and to licensing standards. The building has been vacant for over 7



maintenance



# Renovation Projects

- ❖ New septic and drainfield, per BLDHD approx  
\$10,000
- ❖ New flooring throughout (grant from MCCF) approx \$9500
- ❖ Removal of paneling and replace with drywall  
\$6000
- ❖ New plumbing fixtures in bathrooms, classrooms, kitchen \$2000
- ❖ New energy efficient lighting (BSR grant)  
\$2400
- ❖ Outside building maintenance & paint  
\$3000
- ❖ Fencing for playground  
\$3000
- ❖ Fireproofing mechanical room  
\$2500
- ❖ Appliances (stove fridge freezer commercial sink)

# Licensing Costs

- ❖ Electrical permit & inspection  
\$1000
- ❖ Plumbing permit & inspection  
\$1000
- ❖ Fire Inspection  
\$600
- ❖ Environmental health inspection  
\$200
- ❖ Lead Risk Assessment  
\$500
- ❖ Playground Inspection  
\$600
- ❖ Zoning Fees  
\$400
- ❖ Background Check for Director

# Equipment/Materials Needed to Open

You can find a breakdown of specific equipment [here](#). Rough estimates can be found below.

## Materials Needed \$39,000

Infant Classroom	\$13,000
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Preschool 3 & 4 year olds	\$10,000
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School Age	
\$5,000	

Playground	
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# Donations Received since March 2022

- ❖ 25 preschool/child size chairs - Stepping Stones Child Care (Lake Ann)
- ❖ Outdoor table/bench - private donation
- ❖ 10 school age chairs - private donation
- ❖ Multiple toys, dramatic play items & books - private donations
- ❖ 15 preschool sleeping cots - NMCAA preschool at Betsie Valley
- ❖ Infant room changing table - private donation
- ❖ Front Desk - private donation
- ❖ \$1500 raised through GoFundMe

# How can you help?

- ❖ Spread awareness and support the need
- ❖ Reach out to people you may know that may be willing to donate
  - Materials
  - Equipment
  - Toys
  - Infant/Toddler/Preschool clothes
  - Books
  - Skilled trades
  - Labor
  - Monetary
- ❖ Share our vision and mission to help get our project up and running