



Plymouth Families Gain Relief as Mid-State Health Center Expands Childcare Solutions

03/2024 Expanding childcare resources and services is a costly and complicated process, but a necessary one for communities across the Granite State. The lack of affordable and accessible childcare options continues to challenge local families, particularly in rural areas, affecting many aspects of their lives and careers.

Limited openings in existing childcare facilities and increasing costs force many families with young children to either spend a significant portion of their income on childcare or leave the workforce entirely. Families in rural areas often face even greater struggles, frequently traveling significant distances to find adequate care.

In 2020, a community-based feasibility study revealed that Plymouth and surrounding towns struggled to provide sufficient childcare services to their residents. The study showed that the Plymouth community was underserved by 75% for infant and toddler childcare needs.

The [Little Antlers Learning Center](#), a licensed non-profit childcare center in Plymouth—formerly known as the Mid-State’s Children Learning Center—recognized the substantial demand and need for high-quality childcare in the area. With the goal of aiding the community in addressing this significant need, [Mid-State Health Center](#) embarked on a mission to expand capacity, aiming to triple it.

Established in 2007 to serve 22 children, the learning center initially served as a workforce recruitment tool for the health center's staff. By 2020, Mid-State was determined to further invest in the childcare center and support its expansion efforts to serve more families. Like many initiatives at the time, the COVID-19 pandemic put these plans on hold. Mid-State reached out to local businesses and larger employers in hopes of partnering on the childcare expansion project. However, none were willing to take the risk at the time, with many later expressing regret for not participating.

Undeterred, Mid-State pursued alternative funding methods for the \$3.1 million community-focused expansion project. With the help of Community Development Block Grants, local fundraising, and a \$50,000 matching donation from the Bank of New Hampshire, the Little Antlers Learning Center officially opened its doors in August 2022 at an 8,400-square-foot former Sears facility located at 742 Tenney Mountain Highway.

Reflecting its community-based approach, the center involved the community in renaming the renovated facility. In spring 2021, community members participated in a poll and selected the name "Little Antlers Learning Center," suggested by a member of the Mid-State team. Community feedback and involvement have been integral to the organization throughout the expansion process.

Now able to accommodate over 70 children, Little Antlers Learning Center has successfully tripled its services to the community. The center provides high-quality, affordable childcare no matter a family's financial situation. In compliance with federal funding requirements, 51% of the children served are from low-to-moderate income households. While there is no waitlist for low-to-moderate income families, nearly 200 families above these guidelines are still waiting for spots.

Mid-State not only led this expansion effort but also improved its ability to provide for childcare employees and recruit and retain teaching staff. As the employer, Mid-State offers all Little Antlers staff high-quality benefits, including no-cost childcare for full-time teaching staff.

Little Antlers Learning Center is proud to provide the community with a high-quality facility staffed by experienced professionals dedicated to ensuring children follow a curriculum that sets them up for success. The staff works diligently to build community and partnership with the families they serve, fostering a safe, loving, and caring environment where children can learn and grow.



MID-STATE HEALTH CENTER

Where your care comes together.

OUR MISSION

At Mid-State Health Center, we are dedicated to making quality healthcare more affordable and accessible for all. As a Federally Qualified Community Health Center in rural New Hampshire, we lead the way in innovative, patient-centered primary care. Our mission is to provide sound primary health care that is accessible to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay.

OUR APPROACH

We treat the whole patient using the medical home model, which improves health outcomes, reduces costs, and enhances satisfaction for patients, families, and staff. At Mid-State Health Center, we are committed to doing what is right for the patient as part of our civic duty.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our commitment extends beyond just our patients to the entire community. We involve community leaders in our Board of Directors and encourage our staff to actively participate in community support activities. This integrated approach ensures we uphold our philosophy of doing what is right for both our patients and our community.



This initiative is part of the Granite United Way's Child Care Business and Employer Partnership Project, also known as Work Well. April, 2024.

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