

Fargo company leading efforts to start day care

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The Forum - 11/24/2008

A Fargo company is spearheading efforts to add another child care center to the city in the wake of a day care dilemma with facilities closing abruptly.

Knight LLC, the parent company of Knight Publishing Inc., is forming a coalition of local businesses to provide matching grants of up to \$50,000 to add a day care center to south Fargo. Other facility locations are possible if the program is successful.

Knight CEO Rich Slagle questioned what would happen if company workers, who are parents, had to call in sick because the day care centers they use suddenly closed. He and other co-workers decided to help address the issue.

“So we were sitting around and just said ‘You know what, let’s combine some efforts and talk to some other businesses,’ ” Slagle said. “This could be something that could help people.”

Knight announced its efforts less than a week after the most recent and fourth facility closure so far this year. West Fargo’s King of the Jungle child care center unexpectedly closed on Nov. 10.

If the Knight grant program is successful, Mike Marcil, CEO of The Marcil Group, offered office space that’s about 1,600 square feet for the day care center in the 32nd Avenue Center in south Fargo, Slagle said. The program could also include other potential day care sites in West Fargo’s Pioneer Center and by Knight Printing’s office at 16th Street and Main Avenue in Fargo.

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Knight would not run the child care centers, but they would be operated independently, Slagle said. Prospective operators with strong business plans for the facility will be selected for its management and grant funding assistance.

Slagle said three prospective day care operators toured some of the possible facility locations last week.

Linda Lembke, director of the nonprofit Lakes and Prairies Child Care Resource and Referral, said her organization’s business center is open to helping prospective day care operators with their business planning.

Child Care Resource and Referral’s business center has helped prospective day care providers since its 2006 launch. As many as 72 percent of North Dakota children under age 6 live in families where both parents work away from home, while the national average is 59 percent, according to the nonprofit.

Lembke believes the additional day care facilities will be assets for the children “because that is our future work force. A lot of brain development is happening in those early years, so what happens early sets their patterns for learning.”

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