



Good Shepherd Center Awarded State Grant

By Elise Simcox

Hazel Crest, IL- On June 28, 2022 Good Shepherd Center for Exceptional Children (GSC), was awarded a Grant issued by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Early Childhood. The purpose of the grant is to provide funding to recruit and retain staff in the Early Childhood Education industry, so parents in need of childcare can find it. The request for proposal received the highest ranking among submissions in the region. This money will go to servicing Childcare Providers in Southern Cook County.

Through the Early Childhood Education and Care grant, Good Shepherd Center plans to provide support to local Providers in a collaborative partnership fashion and create a sustainable Human Resource structure to recruit and hire staff, thus opening more availability for childcare in the area.

“All of us at Good Shepherd Center have become well aware of the struggles that Childcare Providers have faced over the past two-plus years of the pandemic,” Executive Director Brendan McCormick states. “Prior to COVID, most Providers in our area were at capacity of children in their Centers, but then March 18, 2020 came and many Centers had to close their doors for 3 months to stem the pandemic,” McCormick said. When the pandemic seemed to slow, the issue of finding staff to return to their jobs or come into the childcare industry for employment, it was next to impossible to secure proper staffing.

Through the Early Childhood Education and Care Grant, Good Shepherd Center plans to provide support to local Providers in a collaborative partnership fashion and create a sustainable Human Resource structure to recruit and hire staff, thus opening more availability for childcare in the area. The grant will also assist to educate parents and families on the importance of childcare.



Increasing SEO For Good Shepherd Center

By Elise Simcox

What is SEO?

SEO stands for 'Search Engine Optimization', which is the process of getting traffic from free, organic, editorial, or natural search results in search engines. It aims to improve your website's position in search results pages. Remember, the higher the website is listed, the more people will see it.

Why does Good Shepherd Center need to increase SEO?

As the world of technology evolves, so must our fundraising tactics. Having a higher SEO visibility assists Good Shepherd in a number of ways, but the most important is giving ourselves 'Credibility.' The term credibility refers to the number of other online websites that endorse, or link to, our website.

How Can YOU Help Good Shepherd Center Increase SEO?

If you have donated to Good Shepherd Center on behalf of your business, we will send you our digital logo. You can then have it placed on the bottom of your website/page that you are a proud supporter of Good Shepherd Center for Exceptional Children. You will then back-link the photo to gscenter.org

What if you are an individual donor and want to help increase SEO?

If you are an individual donor, following all of our social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram) at [@gskids](https://www.instagram.com/gskids) will help tremendously. Be sure to comment, like and share all of our postings to increase awareness of Good Shepherd Center.

For advertising opportunities on the Good Shepherd Website please contact Elise Simcox at esimcox@gscenter.org

Brendan McCormick



Good Shepherd Center Continues to Thrive

As our current Fiscal Year comes to an end, I am pleased to share that Good Shepherd Center has enjoyed yet another great year of serving families throughout south suburban Cook County.

The BIG news this year though is that we have expanded one of our programs, the Community Partner Program was awarded to provide this same service for northern Cook County! I am proud of the staff in this program as our funder witnessed the good work they had accomplished in south suburban Cook County and was confident that we could do that in this new area. To meet the needs of this new program area, we secured office space in Rolling Meadows and were pleased to bring on Vianey Abarca and Paola Tovar as team members to handle the tasks in this area.

While it has continued to be a bit of a challenge as the corona virus slowly eased its grip on our other programs, it was still obvious that those we serve were still being cautious allowing others into their home or Child Care Center. To help them feel more at ease, we made numerous changes to assure those that needed our support had what they might need, including:

Respite Care: amended many of our policies and procedures to be sure that safety of all was at the forefront of our work, including recruiting people the family knew to refer to us as Respite Workers and allow parents who still had to work at home stay in the home during our service time.

Early Intervention: provided training and support for parents via virtual assistance and toward the end of the fiscal year in person service began again,

Child Care Training Program: held all of their trainings and our annual Strong Children ~ Strong Communities conference via Zoom but again, toward the end we began to initiate in-person trainings,

Acorn Child Care Center: the number of children was reduced dramatically from pre-COVID numbers, the children slowly began to return once their parents felt their children would be safe,

Development: while we had to cancel our Fashion Show for the second year in a row to be sure that people would not get sick, we were able to continue to host our Golf Outing and hold Super Bowl and March Madness pools, which turned out to be great fun for those that participated.

We also realized more good news as the fiscal year ended on June 30, 2022 as we were able to renew our Respite Care grant with increased funding to allow us to serve even more families in FY23. We do struggle as all businesses do in the regard of recruiting needed staff to provide the services. So if you know of a person that might be a positive addition to our staff as they go into family homes to work with children and adults with intellectual / developmental disabilities, please have them contact Mary Ellen McLoughlin at the main office.

We also are happy to introduce Elise Simcox as our new Development Coordinator. In addition to handling our current events, Elise has many new ideas to further strengthen the agency as we continue to grow. I am excited to see all the new ideas she has for sharing the good work we do with the community and institute new events that add to our funds to serve the community.

Finally, we recently received a grant from the Department of Human Services through the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) to assist in mending problems brought about by Covid to Child Care Providers. More specifically, we will be aiding Providers in south suburban Cook County to recruit new staff and educate parents on the importance of a high-quality childcare program.

In 2023, Good Shepherd Center shall celebrate our 60th anniversary of services for individuals with intellectual / developmental disabilities, as well as all children and their families. We could never accomplish all we do without the support of friends in our community who share our mission of helping those in need. We hope to continue the growth of the agency to serve even more families and hope that you will join us in this regard by attending our community events or sponsoring our efforts in any way you may be able to do.

Brendan P. McCormick

Maggie Kearne



I want to take this time to give thanks for all of the support and congratulations I have received from folks upon my promotion to my new position as Associate Executive Director at Good Shepherd Center. I feel honored to be part of the legacy and reputation they have created in their nearly 60 year history.

For those of you who don't really know me, I have been part of Good Shepherd Center (GSC) since 2006. In my time at GSC I have supported their mission and values by leading the Community Partner Training program. In this program we work to provide training and resources to Child Care Professionals whether they are in the home or center. I also provide leadership to the staff in professional development and general operations and support the management team in acquiring new funding for Good Shepherd Center.

Now that you have an idea about who I am and what I do at Good Shepherd Center, I wanted to share with you how productive GSC was in FY 22.

Let's start with the many new staff we added due to new programming and normal attrition. This has allowed GSC to mirror the communities and clients we serve with the staff we have hired. It has been very exciting to have a more diverse staff in age, gender and culture. Secondly, I want to share with you that this year we have expanded our reach by adding a new partnership with Illinois Action for Children in the North Cook Suburban and the far north city zip codes. This has been an exciting time as we learn about the different demographics and difference in need in these communities. In this new area, we continue to strive to offer the responsiveness and respectfulness that people can expect from Good Shepherd Center.

Another accomplishment this year was a second successful virtual conference, which we held with support from Lakeshore Learning (a store that focuses on educational toys for Early Care and Education programs). They provided curriculum packets which highlighted the social emotional themed workshops they presented. We then ended the year receiving a new six month grant which serves to enhance the Early Childhood Community by building enrollment and problem- solving the reasons why enrollment is low.

Finally, in my role as AED I will do my best to stay in tuned to the needs of Good Shepherd Center with all I have to offer with diligence and commitment to the mission. I am excited about the adventurous period we are in at Good Shepherd and I continue to see the infinite possibilities we have within us as we grow and nurture the community we live and work in.

Congrats Maggie!



Updates

Our childcare facility, Acorn Child Care and Early Learning Center recently acquired a new software called, 'Brightwheel.' It is a top ranked software system for preschools and childcare centers.

The software is allowing our staff an easy tool to communicate with families. It allows our teachers to share milestones, photos and videos of the kids in real time with parents, creating a secure and trusting environment.

Our kids have had a busy and exciting 2022, complete with a Field Trip to the Thunderbolts game and a puppet show!



The 14th Annual Good Shepherd Center Golf Outing



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New Staff Highlights



Elise Simcox, Development Coordinator

In May of 2022, Good Shepherd Center welcomed Ms. Elise Simcox as our new Development Coordinator. Elise comes to Good Shepherd with Sales and Marketing Experience, as well as a Communications degree from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Elise's marketing and corporate association management background assists Good Shepherd with producing organic advertising content, organization and implementation of networking events and fundraisers, and long-term strategic fundraising planning.

Elise lives in Mount Greenwood, but considers her real home to be in the Northwoods of Wisconsin. She proudly coaches youth cheerleading for the Mount Greenwood Colts, and hopes to take home the gold this winter at state. When she isn't coaching or working, she is spending one-on-one time with her daughter, Sadie, age 6, who keeps her on her toes!



Paola Tovar, Training Coordinator

Paola Tovar is our Training Coordinator for Good Shepherd Center and works out of our new North Campus Office. Paola is responsible for managing tasks related to all training activities in coordination with team. She networks with Illinois Action for Children staff as a member of community partnership program. In addition, Paola oversees the creation for our quarterly calendar training.

Paola is an alumni from Northeastern Illinois University with a bachelor's in Psychology. She plans to pursue her master's degree and specialize as an Occupational Therapist to be a community helper to those in need. In her free time Paola loves doing Zumba. 'Zumba isn't just to lose weight; Zumba is for everything! To laugh, dance, leave the stress, & everything else! I love helping and supporting others because it fills my soul with so much joy & I love that my energy transmits to everyone when I am teaching class.'



Vianey Abarca, Bilingual Training Coordinator

Vianey Abarca is the Bilingual Training Coordinator at Good Shepherd Center, and works out of our new North Campus. She has dedicated twelve years to the Early Childhood Education field. Six of those years were spent holding the Co-Director position at a childcare center. Her primary role with Good Shepherd Center is to offer high quality trainings to childcare providers in Cook County.

In Vianey's free time, she enjoys building miniature homes with her kids and going to watch soccer games with her husband.

Don't Miss Our Events!



'Under The Big Top'

2022 Good Shepherd Center Annual
Fashion Show

www.gscenter.org

Good Shepherd Center is excited to announce that our most anticipated fundraiser, the annual Fashion Show, will be happening Saturday, September 10, 2022. 100% of all proceeds from the Good Shepherd Center Fashion Show goes directly towards funding the programs the agency offers. These programs include: Early Intervention, Respite Care, Child Care Provider training and In-Home Waiver support. Without annual fundraisers such as the Fashion Show, the agency would struggle to provide the quality care it is determined to uphold.

The event will again take place at the lovely Idlewild Country Club with the theme 'Under The Big Top'. We hope to see all our current Fashion Show supporters as well as many new faces in attendance and on the runway! There isn't a better way to express you and your child's fashion sense and personalities than strutting down a runway!

We are calling on all Good Shepherd Center's family, friends, and supporters to make this our most fabulous fashion show to date! There are many ways to get involved: securing donations for the silent auction and raffle, financial donations, sponsorship opportunities, securing an ad in the event program, store recommendations, models, attendees, and volunteers.

Tickets and Sponsorships are available for purchase at gscenter.org

If you are interested in participating in any capacity please contact Elise Simcox at esimcox@gscenter.org or 708-985-3728



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DUCK RACES



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In-Home Respite Care

Minimum Requirements:

- High School Diploma or Equivalent
- Must Have a Valid Driver's License
- Must Be Able To Lift 50 Pounds
- At least one year of experience assisting people with disabilities preferred.

If you are interested, send your CV to:

mkeane@gscenter.org



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