



LaunchPad was created as a new chamber coalition in October 2018, in partnership with the Kosciusko Community Foundation and United Way, to help solve the child care crisis in Kosciusko County. According to recent data, there is a shortage of 1,700 child care seats, and of the seats that we do have, less than one third are considered high quality according to Indiana's rating system. We know that low and moderate income families cannot afford the cost of care, which can be \$9,000 or more or more per year for one child. Another problem that compounds the situation is the lack of qualified early childhood educators. Early childhood education is one of the lowest paying professions. While regulations call for more education for teachers, wages are low and benefits are negligible. LaunchPad seeks to strengthen the climate of early learning in Kosciusko County by focusing on the most recent research for children, birth to age five, and meeting the needs of our youngest citizens.

We hired a new full time employee, Sherry Searles as the Director of LaunchPad. Recently, LaunchPad received a Child Care Desert Grant from Early Learning Indiana. Additionally, during COVID-19, LaunchPad opened a free temporary childcare center for essential healthcare workers. The center has been open for the past five weeks and will be closing this Friday since most childcare centers are opening back up again.

I have some additional links with information about LaunchPad below. Let me know if you need anything else. Thank you!

LaunchPad Website: <http://www.klaunchpad.com>

LaunchPad Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Launchpad-374151843142045/>

Temporary Childcare Center Article: <http://www.inkfreenews.com/2020/04/23/free-childcare-center-for-healthcare-workers-opens-monday/>