



To Whom It May Concern,

I am Kaylee Linn-Wellford, the Director of First Step Child Center in Deadwood, South Dakota. We are located on Deadwood Main Street.

The Start of First Step Child care was born from a small group of committed citizens in the Lead-Deadwood area who saw an overwhelming need for a licensed, safe, and quality early childhood education center. A study was done by Voices for Children that revealed a staggering need for these types of services. With that study, the Northern Hills Alliance for Children (NHAC) Board of Directors was created. This Board fundraised and in March, 2011, successfully opened the First Step Child Care Center. This Center offers care and education to children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. The mission of NHAC is to provide affordable, secure and healthy childcare and educational service to families with young children in the Northern Black Hills. We are currently providing this to 47 students, and we have full classrooms with waitlists that continue to grow.

We have a total of 22 staff members, including administrative staff, head teachers, lead teachers, assistant teachers, a cook, janitorial staff and substitute teachers.

We recently started to revamp our children's outdoor play space, it was in great need of repair due to safety reasons and wear over the years. Wharf mine donated \$10,000 to fund the playground remodel, which included a beautiful 6 foot privacy fence. We strive to get our children outdoors as much as we can and now we are able to accomplish this with peace of mind that our kids are safe as they play. From the years of 2016-2021 Coer-Wharf donation fund has provided NHAC a total of \$44,750. Wharf's Sustainability fund has provided us \$17,500 since 2016 to 2010, for projects to improve our education center.

Continued support from Wharf is a necessity. We are a non-profit organization that relies heavily on grants, donations and fundraising. Our center would not be able to sustain itself without this level of support. We not only need it for general operations but to continue to grow our educational facility. To provide learning opportunities like Woods Wednesday which will be starting this fall. We will spend the day in an outdoor classroom. Our kids will need weather appropriate clothing and we need support in order to supply this need. Our kitchen will soon be needing some upgrades to continue to feed our children healthy meals.

Northern Hills Alliance for Children is in full support of the Wharf and mine life expansion. Wharf continues to be a huge supporter of our community providing jobs for the local community and giving opportunities to organizations like our the ability to thrive and in turn support our community further.

Thanks,
K Linn