



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Watertown Community Mobilizes to Address Urgent Childcare Shortage

WATERTOWN, SD—The Watertown community is joining forces to tackle the critical shortage of childcare options for local families. A recent study revealed that Codington County currently lacks more than 600 daycare spots for children ages 0-5. With the upcoming closure of the Family Worship Center’s Little Blessings program, this shortage will soon grow to over 700 spots.

In response to this pressing need, the Sisters of the Mother of God Monastery have generously donated the former St. Ann’s Hall to relocate and expand Little Blessings into ***Our Little Village Learning Center***, a non-profit daycare dedicated to maintaining the high standards and values established by Little Blessings. The center will provide care for children ages 0-5.

The new facility, spanning 14,000 square feet, aims to serve 225 children, increasing the area’s current daycare capacity by 100 spots. The project’s total cost, estimated at \$2.5 million, includes construction, renovation, furnishings, technology, and playground equipment—all essential to meet state licensing and safety requirements.

The Watertown City Council and Codington County Commissioners have acknowledged the urgency of this crisis, pledging \$350,000 and \$150,000, respectively. These funds helped the monastery secure a \$500,000 SD Works Loan. Additionally, the Mother of God Monastery has invested over \$200,000 in consultants, architectural plans, and development fees and has committed another \$300,000, along with donating the building and land.

Community donations have already exceeded \$85,000 from local businesses, churches, and community members. The Watertown Development Company has also redirected its usual funding toward the childcare initiative. However, a funding gap remains, and community support is essential to advance the project.

The community is invited to an Open House on Thursday, November 14, from 5-7 p.m. at the future site of Our Little Village Learning Center. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about the center’s plans and how they can support this vital project. The Groundbreaking Ceremony will follow on Saturday, November 16 at 1 p.m.

“Watertown’s families and workforce depend on access to affordable, quality childcare,” shares Sister Barbara Younger. “This center will provide a much-needed solution, supporting both parents and local businesses. Once operational, it will be self-sustaining, but we need the community’s support to get there.”

The development of Our Little Village Learning Center represents a long-term investment in Watertown's future, ensuring families have the resources they need to thrive and that local businesses can grow with a stable workforce.

To learn more, please contact:

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BOILERPLATE: *Our Little Village Learning Center at Harmony Hill is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing high-quality childcare services for children ages 0-5 in Watertown, South Dakota. Founded to address the critical shortage of childcare in Codington County, the center continues the legacy of Little Blessings Daycare by offering a safe, nurturing environment that fosters learning, growth, and community engagement. With plans to accommodate up to 225 children, Our Little Village Learning Center is committed to supporting Watertown's families and workforce by ensuring reliable, affordable childcare options that benefit the entire community. For more information, please visit harmonyhillwatertown.com/little-village-daycare*

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