

## Success Stories: USDA Helps Meet Rural Child Care Needs

### Outline of Need:

Safe, dependable and affordable childcare was needed in Central City, Nebraska. The community lacked having a childcare facility and the existing home providers in the area could not meet the community's demands for childcare services. Some residents would have to drive 50 miles each day for their child/children's daycare needs.

### How Rural Development Helped:

USDA Rural Development assisted the Merrick County Child Care, Inc. with their necessity for a childcare facility by awarding a \$676,000 Community Facility Loan. The funds were used to construct a daycare center and to purchase equipment totaling \$706,000. The Merrick County Child Care, Inc. derived the remaining funds from cash contributions.

### The Results:

Today, the 5,500 square foot Merrick County Child Development Center is up and running. Nine full-time and two part-time employees staff the center. The childcare is licensed to serve 85 children from infancy through elementary school age. At the center's opening, the enrollment was already close to 50. The center is available to residents of Merrick County and families outside the county. Amenities of the childcare center include interactive computers for the children, volunteers to assist the children with homework, numerous educational programs, bussing, access to the nearby health center, a quiet room for nursing mothers and a huge playground. Accreditation of the center is anticipated by October of 2002.

The center is participating in the Nebraska Department of Education's Food Program and contracts with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for Title XX (subsidized childcare for families).

The community is optimistic that businesses will now be more apt to want to locate in Central City. In the past, the lack of adequate daycare opted businesses to locate elsewhere. The new childcare center is an asset to the community, county and surrounding area. Families are finding a real comfort in having quality and affordable childcare for their children nearby.

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Kids enjoy "vegging out" with a video in the recreational area.



Children enjoy a snack from the kitchen.



Children enjoy their snacks in the spacious eating area.