

To: City of Valdez

From: Stepping Stones Learning Center

Subj: EMERGENT NEED FOR PRESCHOOL/DAY CARE RELOCATION

Dear Mayor O'Neil and Members of City Council,

Stepping Stones Learning Center (SSLC) – the only non-profit (501(c)(3)) Daycare in Valdez - is urgently seeking a partnership with the City of Valdez (COV) to supply a temporary alternate location to relocate our Preschool/Day Care. After sustaining significant water damage as the result of a fire situated in the apartment complex above our facility in the early morning hours of 20 June 2019, immediate remediation efforts went into effect. Unfortunately, certain areas are inaccessible to water extraction. These areas now pose certain near-term/inevitable respiratory hazards to our young clientele, ranging from birth age through age 12.

The above concerns, coupled with the ongoing lack of facility maintenance and inadequate operating space in our current facility all contribute towards our inability to accommodate the growing number of working families seeking safe, secure licensed daycare for their children. This is exemplified on a regular basis, as we are frequently forced to turn away requests for daycare from both long-term residents and newly arrived families. This in turn, negatively impacts our Community's economic and community development. Inadequate opportunities for childcare limit the number of parents seeking employment and can create problems for employers, including; an inability to fill positions with qualified employees, excessive absenteeism and/or a distracted workforce.

As such, SSLC proposes the following:

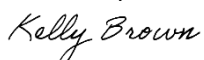
- Draft Memorandum of Understanding establishing partnership between COV and SSLC identifying the Community Center as a temporary relocation site until another suitable facility is identified.
- SSLC to provide COV a monthly lease payment commensurate with current commercial lease terms.
- SSLC to coordinate all State Child Care Grant Programming to include additional State monies paid directly to COV (in addition to lease payments)
- SSLC Staff to operate all facets of the facility between the hours of 0645 and 1815, Monday thru Friday – allowing current Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services (PRCS) after-hours and weekend events/rentals to continue.
- SSLC to perform all cleaning and routine/daily maintenance of Community Center during our tenure.
- SSLC to remain responsible for all licensing, staffing, programming and insurance related to daycare operations.

As the only State Licensed Preschool/Daycare provider in Valdez, it is imperative that we identify an adequate temporary facility as expeditiously as possible – due to the inherent steps necessary in transferring our current License to an alternate location. It is our hope that the current/growing Community-wide partnership being initiated through Providence will bring to light the growing need for adequate childcare, ultimately leading to the construction of a new joint childcare facility in the not-too-distant future. SSLC will continue to seek out a suitable long-term location so that we can vacate the Community Center as soon as is reasonably practicable. Until then, we hope to develop a true partnership where both entities benefit from this temporary arrangement, rather than the City bearing the brunt of the burden with little in return.

We greatly appreciate the financial support previously provided through the budget process and thank you immeasurably for your consideration in helping us through this logistical emergency. Your role will undoubtedly serve to ensure SSLC can continue to provide quality childcare to the growing families of Valdez. If needed, a more in-depth proposal can be drafted based on City Council input, including copies of current reports showcasing the success of similar partnerships across the country, including Juneau, Alaska.

We look forward to your response and we thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,



Kelly Brown

President, SSLC Board of Directors

Cc: Kristina Roche, Natalie Lawrence, Anna Carey, Tommie Galipeau