

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**\$360,000 in Grants Fuel Infant and Toddler Programs
in Burlington, Bennington, and Across Vermont**

Vergennes, Vermont — First Children’s Finance VT is happy to announce the latest round of Make Way for Kids Infant/Toddler Capacity Building Grants, awarding over **\$360,000 to 29 child care programs across Vermont**. These grants are designed to help early childhood entrepreneurs open or expand programs that serve infants and toddlers, addressing one of the most pressing shortages in Vermont’s child care system.

“We’re seeing real momentum as early childhood entrepreneurs work to expand access to high-quality infant and toddler care,” said **Erin Roche**, Director of **First Children’s Finance VT**. “These grants offer child care a strong foundation to build sustainable businesses that families can count on. It’s encouraging to see how Act 76 helps early childhood educators create meaningful and lasting change in their communities.”

The newest grantees reflect the diversity and dedication of Vermont’s early childhood community. **In Burlington’s Old North End, ONE Arts Community School** is preparing to dramatically expand its early learning center, transforming a waitlisted program with 28 children into a much larger facility. With grant support, ONE Arts will relocate from its current space on North Winooski Avenue to its new home at 66 North Avenue — formerly the Sara Holbrook Community Center — beginning this July. The new center will feature nine classrooms, outdoor play space, a gymnasium, and a commercial kitchen that will serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to families.

ONE Arts Co-President **Margaret Coleman** said, “From the beginning, ONE Arts has been about making arts-centered, high-quality care accessible to families of all backgrounds. We see every day how creativity fuels cognitive growth and how consistent, nurturing care strengthens families. Our work is grounded in social justice and community connection, and this new location will help us meet overwhelming demand in the Old North End while continuing to grow our mission and deepen our impact.”

The expansion will add 43 new infant and toddler slots and create 13 new staff positions. Coleman notes that many of the families and staff live within walking distance and will benefit from the center’s continued presence in the neighborhood.

ONE Arts is no stranger to opening new locations and the Make Way for Kids grant program, having recently opened a South Burlington location and expecting to open a Berlin location later this year.

In Bennington, the **Berkshire Family YMCA** is launching a new child care facility within its existing community space, opening two classrooms focused on infant and toddler care. The effort marks an important step toward a larger vision: establishing a permanent child care presence in the Bennington High School building, which is undergoing a major renovation.

Kayla Becker, Operations Director of Berkshire Family YMCA, said, “We’ve already made great progress, and it’s exciting to see this vision taking shape so quickly. This experience has been fast-paced but incredibly rewarding. With this grant, we can get classrooms ready, bring staff on board, and build lasting relationships that will grow as we expand to serve even more Bennington families.”

The YMCA project will serve four infants and eight toddlers, utilizing a renovated space that once served as a classroom in an elementary school. Staff are already in place, and the program is preparing to launch operations later this year.

The full list of grantees includes 29 programs from 13 counties:

- **Addison:** Skies the Limit
- **Bennington:** Arlington Area Child Care, Berkshire Family YMCA Bennington
- **Caledonia:** ABC Nature Academy, Melissa Fournier FCCH, Little Explorers
- **Chittenden:** Our House LLC, Sensations in Learning Next Generation, ONE Arts Inc, Pitter Patter Child Care
- **Franklin:** Samantha Gillilian FCCH, Georgia’s Next Generation Infant Center
- **Grand Isle:** Kaitlyn Eddy FCCH, Caitlin Beaupre FCCH
- **Lamoille:** Apple Tree Learning Centers
- **Orleans:** Savannah Guyette FCCH, Linda Palmer FCCH, Driver Hill Kiddie Care
- **Rutland:** Killington/Pico Ski Resort, Kika Frye-Johnson FCCH
- **Washington:** Neck of the Woods, Tristan Dunbar FCCH, Stacy Rider FCCH
- **Windham:** Brattleboro Center for Children, Hilltop Montessori, Stratton Mountain Child Care

- **Windsor:** Windsor Early Childhood Education Center, Suzy's Little Peanuts, Woodstock Community Playschool, Inc

Funding for these grants is provided by the Vermont Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division. **Janet McLaughlin**, CDD Deputy Commissioner said, "These grants represent an important step toward addressing Vermont's ongoing need for infant and toddler care. We appreciate the commitment of partners across the state who are expanding their programs to serve more families, and we're pleased to support this work in partnership with First Children's Finance."

Applications for the next round of *Make Way for Kids* grants will resume in the fall. For more information or to apply, visit www.firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont or email vtgrants@firstchildrensfinance.org.

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About First Children's Finance VT

First Children's Finance VT supports the growth and sustainability of child care programs by providing business resources, technical assistance, and access to capital. FCF partners with the Vermont Child Development Division and other state agencies to help ensure equitable access to high-quality early childhood education. Learn more at www.firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont.