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# THE KERKHOVEN Banner

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## Where have all the day-cares gone?

Changing regulations, profitability, stress and other factors lead to area shortage

by Cormac Dodd

the same as it is in Brooklyn Center, but here, too, there is an evident great need--a deep shortage.

In the case of Rein, she is one of the many home care providers in rural Minnesota, running what some have described as occupying an indeterminate space between that of a private business and a public entity in the regulations they encounter.

Data from the Bipartisan Policy Center indicates the childcare gap, far more children than providers, in rural areas exceeded supply by 35 %, while this number was 29% in areas considered metropolitan, leaving many rural residents to navigate all the trappings of a child care desert, with significant schisms in availability. And consequentially, home care-providers receive measurably less in funding than their commercial counterparts.

All wonder where Rein's former peers have faded to, but many attribute it merely,

and perhaps prudently, to the challenges that face child care providers.

### The Issue in Minnesota Broadly

Child care in much of rural Minnesota resembles that in the Kerkhoven and Murdock area, where numbers of home-care centers in the small-towns meet a level of demand set by working parents--though there are not nearly enough of these individuals. Even if they are regulated like public entities, providers must hold fast to a well-informed business model to ensure profit

in a sector where tight profit margins rein.

Unlike commercial daycares in a more metropolitan area, where an array of employees cover a number of tasks and priorities specific to the job, many home providers work alone, cognizant of the pay cuts they would have to take were they to hire an-

other employee.

On average, home day cares receive less funding than commercial centers.

Citing intense regulation and the recurrence of new licensing needs in two-year cycles as reasons for low numbers is not uncommon, accounting for an exodus from the industry, a distinct lack. Inconveniences in the industry are at times of a financial sort to deter prospective child care workers. Thirty-one percent of child care workers were found to be food insecure in 2020, according to an Ohio State University Study. Yet participating families in the United States spend an average of 13 % of their

child care. Many have labeled the industry a broken one.

But communities depend on the vital services of child care providers, be it a difficult business to swing or not.

Families in smaller towns where communities enjoy high amounts of interconnectivity tend to prefer home day care: they have no misgivings about sending their child to the home of some one they know personally, where the child will be treated as one of the house.

Everywhere, waiting lists are long, and they are long here. The vast majority of home providers have the ability to enroll between six and 12 children.

If four in the Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg area are active providers, that leaves around 48 slots available if each license-holding individual was full, which is not currently the case. Enrollment at KMS elementary is around 417.

The problem extends beyond rural Minnesota: in 2019, the Center for American Progress released data that showed 60% of rural Americans live in a child care desert. About 360,000

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Kathy Rein of Murdock has been 'doing day-care' for better than three decades. She sees many factors contributing to the loss of local options in child care. Still, she loves what she does.

## Could former school lot be developed? Open house will look at potential for residential project

by Cormac Dodd

An open house will be held in March for the potential development of a large bare lot in Kerkhoven, once the site of the Kerkhoven school-

house.

The topic was at the center of discussion during the Kerkhoven Economic Development meeting Monday night, and the open house is slated for March 7th. The lot was

purchased in 1994 by Donovan Halverson and Don Lottman, though later Lottman sold his share to Halverson, making the former the sole owner.

Before the December EDA meeting, EDA Chair Eric Rudningen

had visited the site in the company of property owner Halverson, along with Kelly Hauge and Dana Moleaar of Don's Building Center, to further discuss project drafts.

Now an open house has been set.

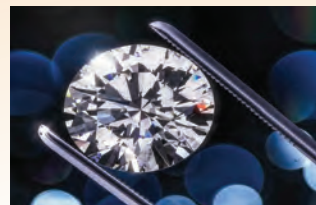
The housing shortage in the Kerkhoven area in view, there has been a push in the area to act upon developable land. An open house will allow Halverson to field a number of offers

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Once the site of the McKinley school, serving as both elementary and high school for the Kerkhoven-Sunburg and then KMS school districts, the large block has sat undeveloped since 1994. An upcoming open house will seek interest in seeing a residential development for that prime Kerkhoven property.

XOXO  
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