



**UNITED METHODIST PRESCHOOL RECEIVES GRANT FROM
USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT**
Funds provided through President's Faith Based and Community Initiative

Fort Morgan, CO – The United Methodist Preschool has been providing preschool and daycare services to the residents of Fort Morgan and surrounding farm areas since 1976. Although the center is located in the United Methodist Church building, it is open to all children without regard to race, religion, or gender. Currently, the center provides morning classes for 20 three year olds on Monday and Friday and for 22 four year olds on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays.

However, the center's building was in need of some improvements. The Center's Director, Suzan Aggson, was continually being cited for issues dealing with the center's need for hot water and the Fort Morgan Fire Department had raised concerns regarding the center's windows. During state inspections the center would receive the highest rating, a seven, for services dealing with children; but for issues regarding the building they would receive a two.

While visiting the Fort Morgan area, Cheryl Scofield, USDA Rural Development Manager, met with Ron Hays, Senior Vice President, Farmers State Bank in Fort Morgan, regarding Rural Development funding. Hays contacted Aggson and mentioned an initiative of the President's for faith based entities and encouraged her to contact the Wray USDA Rural Development Office

Aggson contacted USDA Rural Development and the center was eligible for funding through President Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative. The guiding principle behind this initiative is all social service providers, including faith-based charities, should be able to compete on an equal footing for public dollars to provide public services. The center applied under the USDA Rural Development Community Facility Program, which provides grants, loans and loan guarantees to public entities, non-profit organizations and tribal governments to develop essential community facilities -- like schools, libraries, medical clinics, community centers, and fire and rescue stations -- in rural towns of up to 20,000 in population. The day care center was awarded a grant for \$6,600.

With this funding the center will be able to install a hot water heater, something the center has been without since the onset, in the two lavatories. The center's windows currently are a single pane roll out style and do not open wide enough to accommodate their use as a fire exit and are a safety concern. The grant funding will allow for four new windows to be installed thereby alleviating these issues. The remaining funds will be used to grade and resurface the existing playground. Aggson credits Hays with being a driving force for the center to obtain this funding.

655 Parfet Street Room E-100 • Lakewood, CO 80215 • (720) 544-2904 • (720) 544-2969 FAX
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“Our center helps fill a need within the community. It offers a creditable program for children to learn the values of respect, sharing, and cooperation,” said Aggson. “The stability of leadership within the center has contributed mightily to a sense of continuity and security for our young clients,” said Phillip A. Tarman, Pastor, United Methodist Church. During the history of the preschool, there have only been a total of four employees, Aggson and three other teachers. In fact, Aggson has been at the center since 1976 and has taught several generations of the same family.

USDA Rural Development is working with local communities to reach out and educate faith based organizations about our funding opportunities. We are committed to helping groups and individuals learn about and access Rural Development programs that can enhance their capacity to serve their community. USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. For additional information on USDA Rural Development Programs contact the Wray Office at 970-332-3107, ext. 4.