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HELENA COLLEGE
University of Montana

Helena Regional SBDC

Creative Beginnings

Helena, MT



> "The SBDC has been essential in assisting Creative Beginnings in gaining the financial support and freedom to expand. This will allow us to offer more quality care options to families in need of childcare."
> **Rachel Bray, *Owner***

Rachel Bray watched her Mom run an in-home child care facility while she was growing up and went on to work in child care facilities in college. After college, Rachel took a job that included a great deal of travel, and she was missing out on the school activities with her kids. She also saw the need for quality childcare facilities in East Helena. She opened Creative Beginnings in 2014, which offers a family-oriented atmosphere and activities based on the children's desires and needs.

Today the facility provides quality service which is above the state standard for childcare. They participate in the STARS to Quality program and offer summer care for school-aged children that the city has stopped providing. With the growth of Creative Beginnings and the need for childcare in the area, Rachel knew that it was time to grow her business.

Creative Beginnings reached out to the Helena Small Business Development Center for assistance as they were seeking funding to expand services in the East Helena area. SBDC Regional Director Ryan Loomis helped introduce owner Rachel Bray and her husband Vince to the Montana Business Assistance Connection and work with them to acquire loans for their expansion and secure funding for a new property and resources for renovation. The SBDC was able to help review cash flow evaluations, worked with Rachel and Vince to get their funding source, and assisted with human resource planning for the expansion. Ryan has also been researching grant opportunities and providing applications. Rachel was able to secure a Child Care Stabilization Grant for Creative Beginnings.

Creative Beginnings is planning on expanding its services in the East Helena area and surrounding community, extending its service to a 7500 square foot building, and adding 20 to 25 employees. This will allow Creative Beginnings to add service to 40 or 50 more children in addition to the 30 children currently being served.

The impacts of the expansion provide more than just daycare. Through the Best Beginnings program, Rachel will be able to increase her provision of care for underserved populations that East Helena and the surrounding community greatly need. It will also continue to help an employable workforce who seek childcare.