



"I wanted to do everything the right way."

*- Heather Sternitzky, Owner
Heather's Bright Beginnings, Granton*

Bright Beginnings in YoungStar

Familiar Territory

Heather was not new to child care or even YoungStar when she started her program. She started out in child care working as a provider in a group child care center in her area. While she worked there, the center started to participate in the YoungStar process, familiarizing Heather with how YoungStar could improve the quality of a program and what was needed to be successful. When she left to start her family child care, Heather's Bright Beginnings, she already knew that she would participate in YoungStar. "I wanted to do everything the right way," said Heather. Luckily, her previous experience in YoungStar gave her a leg up in starting her program off right. She had earned her associate degree in early childhood in 2014, and already had a plan in place to meet the healthy meals and snacks requirements for YoungStar. By the time she first met with her YoungStar Technical Consultant (TC), Carrie Steinke, she was ready to move forward.

Small Changes

With Carrie's guidance, Heather completed a program Self-Assessment to determine the focus for improving her program through her Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). With her QIP in place she was able to assess the materials and practices in her program to make positive changes, such as purchasing needed diversity materials with her micro-grant. Heather chose to go for a 3 Star rating. To get there, one of the first things she tackled aside from program material updates was the budget. Carrie shared sample budgets and information to get her started, and they discussed how having a budget in place would benefit her program. Working with her TC was "an eye-opener," admitted Heather, "about what is good to do and what is good to have." Heather was able to successfully finalize and implement a program budget with Carrie's support. With the changes she made to her program through technical consultation, Heather achieved her goal of earning a 3 Star. She appreciates that now when families are looking at her program as a potential place for their child, her 3 Star rating shows the effort she has put into maintaining the quality of her program.

Continuing Change

Heather has now been in child care for 6 years, and with a 3 Star rating under her belt, she is feeling good about where her program is and continuing in YoungStar. "I like YoungStar a lot," emphasized Heather. "Carrie is so nice to work with...she makes it simple." Moving forward, Heather's goal for now is to maintain her 3 Star rating while continuing to make improvements to her program. One aspect she would like to work on is creating more defined play areas in her program to make the most effective use of the space that she has. She already has ideas for areas like a reading center. For family child care providers who are nervous about inviting a TC into their home, Heather offered some assurance. "We look forward to when Carrie comes," said Heather. "It's beneficial...she pays attention to the kids while she's here and it's not fake...she's good at her job."

Wisconsin's Stars are Shining

YoungStar informs parents, recognizes quality providers and brings resources and support to programs committed to improving quality. But what it's really all about is helping Wisconsin children shine bright.