

Summer 2020

Hourglass Quarterly



CHILD CARE CHALLENGES

SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING

CLEAN WATER EFFORTS

FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

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Letter from the Executive Director

Hello,

First, let me start by wishing you health and stability as we navigate this pandemic and resulting economic downturn. Hourglass firmly believes that Lancaster will get through this and emerge from it stronger than ever before.



With this landscape at the forefront of our minds, the Hourglass made some substantial changes to position itself for continued success in the future. In July, we moved our physical offices to 922 N Queen Street, Lancaster, PA 17603. We are thrilled with our new space and hope to be here for many years to come. Also, in July, we launched our new website. With a generous sponsorship from Lapp Electric, we were able to give our online presence a much needed refresh so that we can better carry out our mission to “provide local reliable information to Lancaster County leaders, ensuring informed decisions, and making Lancaster a better place to live and work.” When the pandemic started, we retooled our Keeping Lancaster Current virtual newsletter to provide up-to-date information to our mailing list. This newsletter is sent out twice per week and highlights articles of interest to Lancaster’s leaders. We invite you to visit the new website at www.hourglasslancaster.org and to sign up for Keeping Lancaster Current.

I am excited to share with you this Summer 2020 edition of the Hourglass Quarterly. The first article puts a spotlight on the child care challenges facing families in Lancaster County. For the article, we interviewed two child care providers who shared their experiences as they look to reopen in August. The second article explores the critiques of single-family zoning, a much maligned planning designation, and if it should be banned. The next article provides an update on the work undertaken to develop and implement a Countywide Action Plan to clean our waterways. Finally, we include summaries of our First Friday Forums for the first seven months of 2020. Videos of the forums from May, June, and July are available on our website in their entirety.

Happy reading!

Jonathan Russell
Executive Director

CHILD CARE CHALLENGES

Families have tough decisions to make

Millions of families across the country are having the same discussion right now – how and where their child care needs will be met in the fall. Most working families need care for at least 40 hours per week, much of which was provided by public schools. Because of the Coronavirus, however, schools are no longer providing guaranteed child care.



Care for children under five is also in crisis. Many child care centers are estimated to close due to the pandemic, putting a price premium on the remaining slots. This increase in price will push child care out of reach for many families, leaving them with few options. For parents working at home, juggling child care and work responsibilities can be quite challenging.

In “The Coming Child Care Crisis” Axios reports, “On top of that, this new normal could set parents back in the workplace — especially mothers, who tend to bear much of the child care

and homeschooling burden. There's the isolation that comes from missing happy hours or team lunches and — even worse — the possibility of being passed over for promotions or raises.”

In Lancaster County, six of the 16 public school districts (and the one charter school) have submitted the required Health and Safety Plans to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. These plans will serve as the local guideline for schools' reopening process. These plans run the gamut from full in-person education to a combination of in-person and virtual learning. Even as school districts developed these plans, guidelines from the state government on managing the coronavirus and public places, changed. Due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, it is likely that school districts will need to adapt their reopening plans in the future.

This uncertainty also is felt in the many child care centers throughout the County. The Lancaster Recreation Commission provides a variety of child care services to families in Lancaster City and Lancaster Township, including full-day infant and toddler care, full-day preschool care, Pre-K Counts, and before and after school care. These services assist approximately



450 families. Currently, Lancaster Rec plans on resuming these services in August with new safety protocols in place such as daily temperature checks, frequent hand washing, requiring masks or face shields (children under the age of 2 are not required to wear masks), and conducting child drop-off and pick-up outside so that parents/caregivers do not enter the building. "These precautions are worth it", says Lancaster Rec Executive Director Heather Dighe. In addition to providing much needed child care, Dighe says, "Social and emotional development is so important at this age. Thankfully our staff is up to the challenge of providing meaningful instruction and interaction".



The Lancaster Early Education Center will face similar challenges when it reopens on August 31. The Center provides child care for 140 families with children that range from infants to five year-olds. From following state guidelines to reassuring "petrified" staff, CEO Nina Moragne says, "ensuring the safety of everyone at the center is our top priority." Despite

the uncertainty the pandemic has brought, the demand for services provided by the Lancaster Early Education Center is at an all time high. "We are at capacity and our waiting list is growing like crazy," says Moragne.



Pictured: Nina Moragne, CEO Lancaster Early Education Center.
(Photo Credit: LancasterOnline)

Without adequate child care, many families are going to be forced to make hard choices. Employers concerned about the well-being of their employees and their families can consider options such as creating more flexible work schedules and changing the way an employee is measured. As the pandemic holds a cloud over all future plans, it is important that families with children do not get lost in the fog.

Article summarized from "The Coming Child Care Crisis" by Erica Pandey from Axios. June 30, 2020. Thanks to Heather Dighe and Nina Moragne for their contributions to this article. 