



## **IDW Mission Grant Evaluation Report Form**

Grant recipients are to complete and submit the report form within one month of the completion of the effort. If this is a continuing ministry, please submit a report by January 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year, in which the grant is received. Include pictures/videos that help share the story with other congregations to encourage them in their own ministry. Final grant funds will be sent upon receipt of this evaluation.

### **Contact Person, Congregation, and email address:**

**Tammy Kratz**

**Christ Lutheran Church**

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1. Please provide a brief overview of the effort:  
Acorns & Oaks Christian Daycare is a mission of Christ Lutheran Church, Bouton, IA. The daycare opened its doors on July 10, 2017. We are located within the Perry Lutheran Home. Our purpose is to serve the community with high quality early childhood education, to teach the value of intergenerational care, and to share our Christian faith. At the time of opening it was the only Christian daycare in the Perry area. It is also the only intergenerational site in the area.
  2. What goals were established for this effort and what did you hope to accomplish?  
Increasing our enrollment to our capacity of 30 children will enable us to become more financially independent.  
We want to expand our mission outreach into the community. To share God's love and word with the children and families in our care and with the entire community.  
We strive to be a leader in the early childhood community in providing and promoting quality education for infant through preschoolers.  
We continue to develop a strong partnership with Perry Lutheran Home in improving quality of life and giving purpose to people of all ages.
  3. Did you achieve your goals? If not, what do you think were some of the contributing factors?

At the time of our opening, Acorns & Oaks had 6 children enrolled. Currently we have 21 children enrolled, ages 3 months to 5 years old. Our goal is to reach our maximum capacity of 30 children. One of the hurdles we have come across in enrolling more children to our program is the fact that we do not accept state child care assistance. As much as we would love to accept families who use state funded child care assistance, we are unable to do so as there are regulations regarding separation of church and state. The Perry area has a larger population of lower income families. Many area families have expressed interest in Acorns & Oaks, but they are unable to afford childcare without state assistance.

To continue to expand our mission outreach, we have started a monthly community effort program. Our children, their families, PLH staff and residents, and CLC congregation have participated in our monthly efforts. So far, we have hosted a food drive for our local food pantry, raised money for Autism Awareness, hosted events in honor of Mother's Day and Fathers' Day events, and helped with Vacation Bible School. Each month Acorns & Oaks seeks new ways to give back to our community. By doing so, we teach the children Christ's love for us and how we serve Christ by serving others. Living our faith, giving back to our community, and spreading the love of Christ has been a blessing for all involved. In addition to our monthly community effort, the members of our congregation have also hosted a morning coffee each month for families as they drop off their children at daycare.

As the first Christian daycare in our community, we were also the first daycare to accept children under 2 years of age. This provided us with a unique opportunity to impact the Early Childhood Education in this community and to foster awareness of the importance of those first formative years in a child's development. Many families are unaware of the impact child care and education have on children within those first 5 years of life. Acorns & Oaks uses the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos. The curriculum is based on 38 objectives for development and learning, which are fully aligned with the *School Readiness Goals for Infants and Toddlers* in Head Start and early learning standards for each state. We also use the Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers. It is fully aligned with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* and state early learning standards.

In partnering with the Perry Lutheran Home, we have been blessed with a unique opportunity to be a home for all ages! The children from Acorns & Oaks interact with the PLH residents every day. Residents enjoy visits from the children so much that they come to visit us in the daycare when they can! The kids have created a beautiful bond with the residents, to the point where the residents are referred

to as grandmas and grandpas. The kids are as comfortable skipping down the halls in the PLH building as they are within the daycare!

In December we gave Acorns & Oaks families the chance to “adopt” a resident that does not have family close by. Working with PLH staff, we matched residents with families, so they could celebrate Christmas together. It was a huge success! It was the first step in establishing long term friendships across generational boundaries.

4. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to undertake this effort again?

One thing that would have been beneficial is to have had all the paperwork and advertising done bilingually. Perry has a large Spanish speaking population. We are currently working on getting this done.

5. What lessons were learned through this effort?

That God is good! As with any new business, the first year has many ups and downs, hurdles to cross, and blessings to count. All made easier to navigate with prayer and faith. God has a plan. Sometimes the work is not always easy, but it is always rewarding! Seeing the seeds of new faith be planted and take hold is a gift that cannot be measured.

6. Will this outreach effort continue and be sustaining? Did a new outreach opportunity present itself?

It is our hope and prayer, is that this outreach continues and flourishes. It is amazing how God has gathered this group. From the dedicated daycare board members, the supportive congregation, the wonderful staff, to the precious children and their families! We follow where He leads with an open heart. We anticipate that as a non-profit childcare center, we will always be dependent grant funding from various sources.

7. What suggestions would you give to a congregation considering a similar effort?

Make sure you do the necessary research. Questions to consider might be:

What population will you serve in your community?

How can you fill the needs of the community in a unique way?

Where does the congregation feel the Lord is leading them on a mission journey?

Have clearly defined goals and timelines.

Trust where God leads you!