New West YMCA—Capital Campaign

EARLY EDUCATION CENTER CONNECTED TO A YMCA

Unique Benefits

YMCA of Dane County

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COMMUNITY NEED:
Urgent Need for Early Childhood Education

> High-quality early childhood education improves school readiness, literacy, and social-emotional development, but many families lack access to affordable, structured learning environments.
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> The Fitchburg area is classified as a child care desert, meaning that there are more than three children under age 5 for every available licensed child care space.
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> 71% of children on child care waitlists statewide are under age 3, reflecting a severe shortage of infant and toddler care.
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> 68% of families cite child care as their biggest workforce barrier.

HOW THE NEW WEST YMCA MEETS THE NEED:
YMCA Early Childhood Education Center

This new facility will feature an EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER and will impact over 100 children to address the child care desert in the Greater Fitchburg Area – almost 3x what our current facility can care for today.

Infant and Toddler Programs (6 weeks to 2 years)

Our caring and experienced educators provide personalized attention, promoting sensory exploration and fostering social and emotional growth.

Outdoor Play and Physical Activity

We believe in the importance of physical development, with ample opportunities for outdoor play and exercise to encourage motor skills and teamwork.

Creative Expression

From arts and crafts to music and dance, children are encouraged to express themselves creatively and explore their imaginations.

Preschool Programs (2 to 5 years)

Our preschool curriculum encourages independence, curiosity, and problem-solving, helping children develop academic skills through hands-on, play-based learning.

Family Partnerships

We work closely with families to ensure a consistent and supportive experience both at home and in the classroom, fostering a strong partnership for each child's success.

WE PLAN TO OFFER:

The new YMCA Early Childhood Education Center will play a significant role in supporting families and children by offering a variety of programs and services addressing early literacy with a focus on school readiness through a research-based approach that fosters cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development. Our approach to child care is centered on providing safe, affordable, and high-quality care for children of all ages. Here's how we plan to address the urgent needs for the young children and their families in our communities:

1. Every Child Belongs, Regardless of Income

Our YMCA offers early childhood education programs that focus on the developmental needs of children, and now as young as 6 weeks of age. Our programs are designed to foster growth in key areas such as cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, all through play-based and structured learning activities. Our YMCA makes duality child care accessible to all families, regardless of their financial situation. We maintain State licensing credentials that allow us to accept the Wisconsin Shares Program along with our YMCA financial assistance to ensure that child care is within reach for as many families as possible.

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program

The WI Shares program is a state-run child care subsidy program in Wisconsin that helps low-income families pay for child care. It helps families pay for child care, making it easier for parents to work or attend school while ensuring that their children are in a safe and supportive environment. It provides financial assistance for child care costs based on family income and the number of children needing care. The state pays a portion of the child care costs directly to the child care provider, and the family pays the remaining amount. Families can apply online or at their local Wisconsin Department of Children and Families office.

YMCA Child Care Financial Assistance Program

This program helps families who need financial support to afford child care services at the YMCA, but do not qualify for the WI Shares Program. The YMCA program aims to make child care more affordable for families, especially for those who do not qualify for the WI Shares Program. Families apply for financial assistance through the YMCA, and the application typically includes details like household income, family size, and any special needs or circumstances. Based on this information, if the family qualifies, the YMCA offers a reduced child care rate using a sliding scale.

# of Kids ≤ 5 years	WI Shares Max Income	YMCA 30% Discount	YMCA 20% Discount	YMCA 10% Discount
1	$42,300	$42,301–$52,300	$52,301–$57,800	$57,801–$63,300
2	$53,304	$53,305–$63,300	$63,301–$68,800	$68,801–$74,300
3	$64,296	$64,297–$74,300	$74,301–$79,800	$79,801–$85,300

2. Safe and Nurturing Environments

At the YMCA, children's safety and sense of belonging come first. Child care programs are designed to ensure that children are cared for in a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment. Staff members are trained in child development, first aid, and emergency procedures to ensure that children are always well cared for. This new facility will have secure entrances and an outdoor learning space specific to this Center.

3. Enrichment Programs

Beyond child care and early education, the YMCA offers enrichment activities like swimming, arts and crafts, sports, science and music, helping children explore their interests and develop new skills. These programs help children grow physically, socially, and emotionally while having fun in a structured setting.

4. Quality Staff and Education

YMCA child care staff are trained professionals with expertise in early childhood education. They are dedicated to creating a positive, engaging, and developmentally appropriate environment for children. Staff-to-child ratios are kept low to ensure that each child receives individualized attention.

5. Community Focus

The YMCA is deeply embedded in the communities it serves, and its child care programs are designed to reflect the needs of each specific community. The YMCA often partners with local organizations, schools, and businesses to ensure that families have access to the resources and support they need.

6. Summer and School-Age Child care

In addition to daycare and preschool programs, the YMCA offers summer camps and after school programs for school-age children as early as 4K. These programs help bridge the gap when school is out of session, providing a safe and fun environment for children to grow, learn, and socialize.

The Power of a Scholarship

When a Social Worker contacted our Y regarding a family struggling to get back on their feet, we knew we could help. At the time, this family was temporarily homeless with two children. The vicious circle of finding/keeping employment during summer months while also trying to afford care for children can sometimes feel impossible to break through. Although all our summer camp scholarships are for school age children, we were able to provide care all summer for a wonderful six year old and her equally wonderful two year old sister on full scholarships. This allowed mom to find and maintain meaningful employment, and we learned as summer was coming to an end that the family did in fact get into a home of their own thanks in part to the care we provided for the two girls all summer long.

NUTRITIOUS MEALS THAT FUEL GROWTH AND LEARNING

At the YMCA of Dane County, we provide fresh, nutritious meals to every child in our early childhood and afterschool programs through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
In 2025 alone, we served 134,268 meals and snacks.

All breakfasts and lunches in our child care programs are handmade daily in the kitchens at each YMCA center, following CACFP's research-based nutritional guidelines.

Our menus emphasize whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, and exclude deep-fried or highly processed items.

In our afterschool programs, every child receives a healthy snack, and children attending schools in food-insecure neighborhoods are provided with a full dinner.

As part of our commitment to building lifelong healthy habits, the new West YMCA will feature a dedicated learning kitchen. This space will allow us to expand our curriculum by introducing children to the joy of preparing and enjoying healthy, delicious food. From simple recipes and hands-on cooking activities to basic nutrition education, we will empower children to develop confidence, independence, and a foundation for healthier choices throughout life.

Our approach goes beyond feeding children; it fosters healthy habits and reduces barriers for working families. The new West YMCA will include a dedicated learning kitchen, allowing us to teach children how to prepare and enjoy healthy meals. We accommodate allergies and dietary needs, and a bilingual staff member helps families navigate enrollment with ease. As our programs grow, so does our commitment to nourishing every child's body, mind, and future.



UNIQUE BENEFITS:

EARLY EDUCATION CENTER CONNECTED TO A YMCA

Unlike standalone child care centers, a YMCA-based facility offers enhanced learning opportunities beyond traditional classrooms, providing a holistic and enriched educational experience.

When extreme weather prevents outdoor play, children have access to the YMCA's full-size gymnasium, fitness studios, and specialized youth activity spaces. These spaces support large motor development through active play, obstacle courses, movement-based games, and physical education activities in a safe, climate-controlled environment. This ensures children remain physically engaged year-round, reinforcing healthy habits from an early age.

Children in the YMCA's child care programs have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of enrichment activities that extend learning beyond the classroom. A few of these include:

Swim Lessons
Water safety and basic swim instruction to build lifesaving skills and confidence in an aquatic environment.

Creative Arts
Exposure to music, visual arts, and dramatic play, fostering self-expression, fine motor skills, and early artistic development.

STEM & Science Projects
Hands-on experiments and explorations that develop early problem-solving skills and curiosity in science, technology, engineering, and math.

Sports & Movement-Based Learning
Age-appropriate sports activities that encourage teamwork, coordination, and gross motor skill development.

In essence, the YMCA addresses the growing need for child care by creating comprehensive, flexible, and high-quality programs that support the overall well-being of children and families. By offering a blend of early childhood education, enrichment activities, and family-focused services, the YMCA helps ensure that children receive the care, attention, and resources they need to thrive.





SCAN TO SEE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR CAMPAIGN