

Network News

Child Care Resource Center Newsletter



A MESSAGE FROM FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

By Jenn Perney

Happy New Year!

Start off the new year by investing in your program! One of the best ways to do that is to reach out to the CCRC staff to come into your program.

Need new activity ideas? We can help.

Having a child with difficult behaviors? We can come observe and offer ideas.

Getting bored with the space and want to rearrange? Call us in to help.

Want to refresh your policies and procedures? Give us a call.

Just need someone who understands what you are doing all day? That's us. Call us to make a connection to another adult.

The CCRC services are non-judgemental and can be a support in an often-isolated role. Reach out to us today.

Not sure who to call?

In Broome County, start with Allie. She can send you to the right person. Call 607-723-8313 ext. 1620

In Chenango County, call Roberta at 607-723-8313 ext. 1522

In Tioga County, call Mary at 607-723-8313 ext. 1187.

Newsletter Highlights

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NEW YEAR, NEW CLASSROOM

By Victoria Allen, Infant Toddler Specialist

Refreshing your classroom after a break is crucial for resetting routines, re-establishing expectations, and re-focusing children of all ages. Prevent regression and behavior issues by creating a structured, positive environment for smooth transitions back to learning. Help shift children from relaxed holiday mode back to the classroom community through clear communication, goal-setting, and re-practicing behavioral norms, rules, and procedures.

How to Refresh:

Go Back to Basics: Ease in and focus on getting back into the flow. Treat the first few days like the beginning of the year, slowly re-teaching procedures (unpacking, transitions).

Schedule time to review rules, procedures

(like lining up, getting materials), and goals, using fun activities like games or charades. Ask children what expectations are, putting responsibility on them to recall and demonstrate. **Emotional Check-in:** Start with warm welcomes and dedicated time for children to share about their break. Use prompts to discuss feelings about returning and foster open communication to support social-emotional needs. Offer specific praise and celebrate small wins to build motivation. Use brain breaks (like GoNoodle) to help students refocus when needed.

Physical Reset: Tidy up the physical space to create a cleaner learning environment. De-clutter, organize supplies, and consider rearranging furniture for a fresh feel. Clean and swap out toys and activities to keep them novel and exciting. Consider a new seating arrangement or make time to go outside or visit another space.

LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Are you a leader in your program? Do you want to take more of a leadership role?

Make sure you join the Leadership Initiative through PDI!

It's free and offers great resources for early childhood leaders. Center or SACC Directors, Assistant Directors, Team Leads, or upcoming leaders.

Are you a Family Child Care or A Group Family Child Care Provider? You are a leader as well! Please join and network with other leaderships across the area and state.

For more information, visit:
<https://earlychildhoodny.org/leadershipinitiative/index.php>



VROOM

By Rachel Dowd, Provider Services Coordinator

Check out this Vroom tip to try out this winter!

I Notice You Notice

Is your child interested in someone else's hair or skin? Children notice race and are curious. You might calmly say, "You're noticing that your friend has beautiful curly hair. That's her hair. Where is your hair?"

Brainy Background

Bringing up skin color or hair texture like you would any other part of the body shows your child that it is normal. They're also practicing how to see things from someone else's point of view. These skills are helpful in having good relationships now and in the future.

Interested in more Vroom tips like this? Visit vroom.org or download their app for daily brain-building tips!

It takes a big
heart
to help shape
little
minds.



A colorful illustration of a brown paper grocery bag filled with various fruits and vegetables. Inside the bag are a blue bell pepper, a red apple, a yellow pineapple, a red onion, and an orange pumpkin. The bag is tied at the top with a white ribbon.

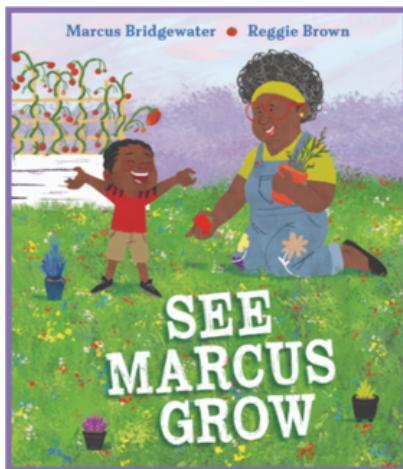
Whole Grain Soft Pretzel Bites

INGREDIENTS:

- 2/3 cup unsweetened, unflavored milk or water
- 1.25 oz package active dry yeast
- 2 tsp pure cane sugar
- 3 1/2 cups white whole wheat or spelt flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 2 tbsp baking soda

DIRECTIONS:

1. Warm the milk or water until just warm to the touch, stir in yeast and sugar. Let stand 5 minutes to activate the yeast. The mixture will become cloudy and have small bubbles on the surface.
2. In a large bowl, mix flour and salt. Stir in the yeast mixture, adding a little more liquid for the dough to come together and feel stretchy without being sticky. Knead dough on a floured surface. Dust dough with flour, shape into a tight ball and return to the bowl. Cover the bowl with a clean towel and set in a warm place for 1 to 1 1/2 hrs, until doubled in size.
3. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Preheat oven to 400.
4. On floured surface, divide the dough into eight pieces. Roll each piece into a 3/4 inch thick rope. Cut each rope into 10 pretzel bites. Transfer to baking sheet.
5. In a saucepan, combine baking soda with 4 cups water and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce to low and drop 10 pretzel bites into water one at a time, letting simmer for 20-30 seconds or until they float to the top. Remove from water and return to the baking sheet.
6. Sprinkle pretzel bites with seasoning of your choice (cumin and garlic powder). Bake 10-12 minutes until deeply browned. Enjoy.



READ FOR THE RECORD

This year celebrates 20 years for JumpStart's Read for the Record. Read for the Record is the world's largest shared reading experience, uniting millions to read the same book on the same day and raise awareness of early literacy.

Over the last 20 years, a book was chosen to read for the national day in October of each year. This year, October started weekly spotlights of the past 20 years. It will end with a new book on Thursday, February 26th. This year's new book is *See Marcus Grow* by Marcus Bridgewater.

Join the Building Brighter Futures for Broome Coalition for the local event Thursday, February 26 at the Broome County Public Library in Binghamton at 10am.

There will be a special reading of the book and fun activities from community organizations.

The event is geared toward children 3-5 and we encourage you to take a field trip with your program!

If you can't join the public event, you can still participate in reading the book at your program.

You can find more information on the website: <https://www.jstart.org/read-for-the-record/>

NEW CCRC STAFF

Roberta Caldwell is the new Chenango Child Care Specialist.

If you are a Chenango County provider, please reach out to Roberta and invite her to your program for a visit. Roberta is a great addition to the CCRC team to help out the programs in Chenango County! Give her a call today!





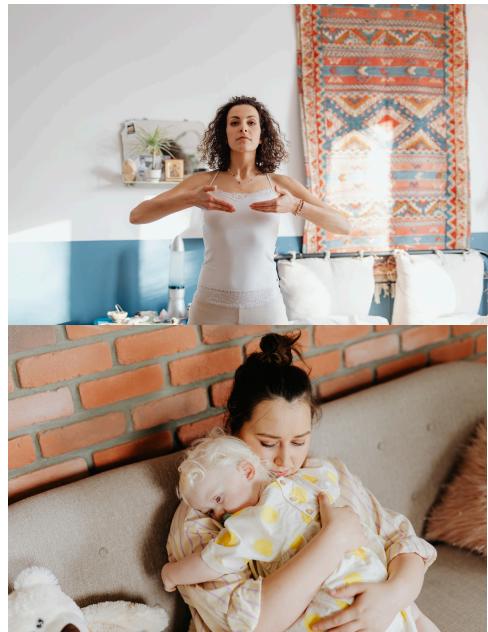
TAKE CARE OF YOU

By Allie Drake, Training & TA Supervisor

In a survey, about 50% of the childcare providers experienced moderate-to-high levels of anxiety symptoms, including feeling nervous or restless/fidgety.

Many things may be contributing to stress in childcare including:

- Financial burdens
- Time constraints
- Parental pressures
- Behavioral challenges
- Physical demands



How to help lower your stress

- Practice Mindfulness- take some time to sit down, and be present in the moment
- Make sure to keep things in perspective- take a step back and ask is this a big problem or a little one?
- Boundaries- try to keep boundaries between work and home life, give yourself time to just focus on home life
- Talk it out- talk out your feelings with family, friends or a therapist. If you don't like talking, you can write it in a journal
- Exercise- Exercise has been shown to greatly lower stress, even just a walk around the block can be beneficial
- Rest- Make sure to get enough rest, it's okay to take a break!
- Selfcare- set aside time for selfcare. Make sure to add it into your schedule

Self-care ideas:

- Drawing
- Singing
- Writing
- Take a bath
- Spend time with family
- Sleep
- Get your nails done
- Listening to music
- Walking
- Dancing
- Watch TV

Need some personalized ideas? Call a CCRC staff person to come to your program to help!



FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS YEARS OF SERVICE

CELEBRATING YEARS OF SERVICE

Congratulations to the following providers who are celebrating years of service in the months of January, February and March.

Chenango County

Amy Bohndorf – 12 years

Brandi Camenga – 18 years

Cassie Clipston – 6 years

Kathleen Duncan – 25 years

Kristi Favorito – 12 years

Lisa Unkel – 23 years

Broome County

Valerie Antonakos – 20 years

Amara Arshad – 9 years

Bonnie Boczulak – 29 years

Oliva Folkes – 3 years

Tressa Imhotep – 6 years

Joella Milner – 24 years

Kylie Piech-2 years

Diane Starks – 20 years

Mary Wood – 32 years

Deborah Young – 24 years

Tioga County

Pam Arnold – 26 years

Teri Brogdale – 33 years

Kim Holland – 9 years

Holly Houston – 6 years

Emilee Komarisky – 3 years

Hannah O'Connor – 1 year

Christine Rathke – 9 years

Morgan Spencer – 1 year

Stacey Thorp – 21 years

Catherine Westfall – 30 years

FAMILY CHILD CARE/ GROUP FAMILY CHILD CARE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

We wanted to provide an update on the bills A4003/S4929 which proposed to change the infant age/staff ratios family day care (allows one caregiver to care for two infants/toddlers under 18 months.)

This legislation was vetoed by the Governor and will NOT take affect.

The existing regulations defining an infant in family/group family child care as age 2 will remain.



PLAY THIS WINTER

By Abbie Bennett, Training & Coaching Specialist

Here are a variety of play ideas for the upcoming winter months.

Outdoor Snow Day Activities

- Snow Painting: Fill spray bottles with colored water and paint the snow.
- Create a Snow Obstacle Course: Jump over mounds, crawl under branches, and zigzag through cones.
- Snow Bowling: Use snowballs and plastic bottles as pins.
- Winter Scavenger Hunt: Look for pinecones, icicles, and unique snowflakes.
- Build an Igloo: Stack snow bricks to create a cozy hideout.
- Snow Sculptures: Go beyond snowmen and make animals, castles, or cars.
- Frozen Bubbles: Blow bubbles and watch them freeze in the chilly air.
- Go Hiking: Bundle up and explore winter trails.
- Winter Picnic: Pack warm snacks and enjoy them outdoors.

Indoor Snow Day Activities

- Bake Cookies: Let your children help with mixing, decorating, and, of course, taste-testing.
- Hot Cocoa Bar: Set up toppings like marshmallows, whipped cream, and sprinkles.
- Craft Snowflakes: Fold paper and cut out intricate designs.
- Build a Blanket Fort: Create a cozy retreat with blankets and pillows.
- Make Snow Ice Cream: Mix clean snow with condensed milk and vanilla extract.
- Indoor Snowball Fight: Use soft, fluffy balls or crumpled paper.
- Read Books: Choose winter-themed stories or have a family read-aloud session.
- DIY Snow Globes: Use jars, glitter, and tiny figurines to craft personalized snow globes.
- Treasure Hunt: Hide clues around the house for a fun indoor adventure.
- Yoga for Kids: Stretch and relax with guided yoga videos you can find online.

Indoors and Outdoors Activities

- Snowflake Study: Catch snowflakes on black paper and observe them up close.
- Snow-Themed Crafts: Make cotton-ball snowmen or decorate pinecones.
- DIY Winter Fashion Show: Create outfits from scarves, hats, and gloves.
- Music Time: Play instruments or create a snow day playlist together.

FOUR TIPS TO BOOST YOUR ENROLLMENT

By Isabelle Gorham, Business Specialist

As an in-home child care provider, you probably can't give yourself a 40 hour work week and still provide reliable child care for the families who depend on you. However, here are four changes you can make within your program right now in order to give your enrollments a boost that will last!

1. Extend Your Hours: By being open for 9 or 10 hours each day, you allow families time to get to and from work. Some folks have hefty commutes each day, often times made longer by the need to go out of the way for child care. Staying open until 5:30p instead of 4:30p opens your program up to many more potential families who couldn't otherwise consider your program because their work hours and travel time exceed your business hours.

2. Shift Your Hours: If you cannot afford to extend your daily hours, consider shifting your open hours to better fit the working hours of the families in your program. If you are open from 6a to 4p, your first child doesn't come until nearly 7a every day, shift your hours later by 45 minutes, 6:45a to 4:45p each day, and see if that increases the number of interested/potential families for your program.

3. Fit The Needs You See: If you notice that you are getting requests for the same days, hours, or types of care over and over again, see if you can adjust your program to fit those needs. By filling a need, or gap, in the market, you are ensuring that those families have a program they can at look at when considering child care.

4. Talk To Your Families & Community: If you haven't noticed an area of opportunity that you can fill or meet, talk to the families already in your program. Ask your neighbors and local community what they need as far as child care. Our area can always use more quality child care opportunities, so take this chance to make your program an option for those closest to you!

ENROLLMENT HELP

Are you struggling with your enrollment still after looking at these tips?

Call Isabelle for personalized assistance to help your program!

Want to start using social media or create a website? Isabelle can help.

For an individualized assessment of your program, call Isabelle at 607-723-8313 ext. 1616.



TRY A HAPPY MEAL

By Cathy Lee, Health and Wellness Supervisor

When you hear the phrase "Happy Foods," what comes to mind? Maybe you thought of sugary desserts, flavorful fast foods or an adult beverage? We tend to celebrate with cake and ice cream. We have Pizza Parties (I have never been invited to a Carrot Party). Advertisements show happy people eating happy foods, which usually don't show images of beans or brown rice. The happy foods do make us feel good, but only for a short time.

Food can impact our mood. There is actually a field called Nutritional Psychiatry where studies have shown some foods uplift our mood and protect us from depression while others deflate our mood and increase our risk of depression. It appears that sweets and ultra-processed foods fall into the second category. Studies have found that people can feel anxious, irritable, angry or lethargic several hours after eating foods packed with refined carbohydrates and sugars.

Whole grains contain a special type of fiber, called fermentable fiber, which bacteria in your gut can digest. It improves the health of your microbiome. When the microbes eat this fiber, they produce small molecules that are linked to a whole host of benefits, including decreased inflammation, improved insulin sensitivity, and better communication between the gut and the brain. According to Dr. Kara Margolis of New York

University, these effects have been associated with improved mood and a decreased risk of mood disorders. She suggests if you are looking to boost your mood, there are a few things to try.

1. Go home made. Cut back on ultra-processed foods. That includes foods with added preservatives, artificial sweeteners, refined carbohydrates and white flours, natural and artificial flavors, and emulsifiers, such as soy lecithin, xanthan gum and guar gum.
2. Use more whole grains. Instead of grabbing a croissant or sugary cereal for breakfast, have a bowl of overnight oats. Toss corn or barley into your salads. Eat corn tortillas instead of flour ones. Swap out biscuits and dinner rolls for 100% whole wheat breads, pastas and pizza crusts.
3. Try more beans and lentils. A small amount of beans in your diet can impact your microbiome in a good way. Unlike many leafy greens or vegetables, you don't have to eat many beans to get a hefty dose of fiber. For example, a quarter cup of cooked black beans contains about five to seven grams of fiber.
4. Use a bit of caution. Start off with a small serving of beans and eat larger servings over time. With beans, some individuals will get a bit of gas and bloating if they eat too many or they're not used to eating them!
5. You can also find high amounts of fermentable fiber in chia seeds, berries, apples, pears, avocados and unripe bananas.

After your microbiome adjusts, the bacteria will thank you by raising your mood long-term. After all, studies suggest that when your gut bacteria are happy — they make you happy as well.

COOL FACTS ABOUT SNOW

By Cathy Lee, Health and Wellness

Supervisor

Snow might look simple from a distance, but it's actually quite complicated! Here are some cool snow facts to make the cold weather more interesting!

- Snow isn't white! Snow only appears white because snow crystals are translucent, but when they snowball together, light scatters off the tiny surfaces and edges, creating the white appearance.
- Snow can be red, pink, orange, yellow, or green. While technically colorless, snow may contain dust or algae that give it different colors. Pinkish green snow is called Watermelon Snow and is common in mountains. It has a sweet smell and taste, but contains nasty algae that will make you sick, so don't eat it!
- The largest snowflakes ever recorded were enormous! According to Guinness World Records, the largest snowflakes on record were 15 inches in diameter and 8 inches thick. They fell on Fort Keogh, in eastern Montana, on January 28, 1887. I fact checked this claim, but since there were no photos we just have to believe the stories!

- Some people are afraid of snow (not just driving in it!). Fear of snow is called chionophobia, which comes from chion, the Greek word for snow. They imagine being caught in an avalanche or buried under snow. For some people, it's similar to the fear of water.
- Snow is mostly air. About 90% of snow is air. It is an insulator and keeps us warm. That is why it's used for hibernation by many animals. An igloo can be 100 degrees warmer inside! If you're ever stuck in the snow, build a snow cave!
- Snow is good for the garden. It provides needed moisture as well as nutrients. Nitrogen attaches to snowflakes as the snow falls through the atmosphere. The Old Farmer's Almanac calls snow a "poor man's fertilizer."
- Snowflakes don't always fall slowly. They can fall up to 9 miles per hour in the right conditions!
- No two snowflakes are alike. Each one follows a unique path through the atmosphere, creating different patterns and shapes.

Whether you are hoping for a snow day or dread shoveling it, these flakey works of art are fascinating science and full of strange surprises. The next time snowflakes start falling, you'll be able to see them in an entirely new way.



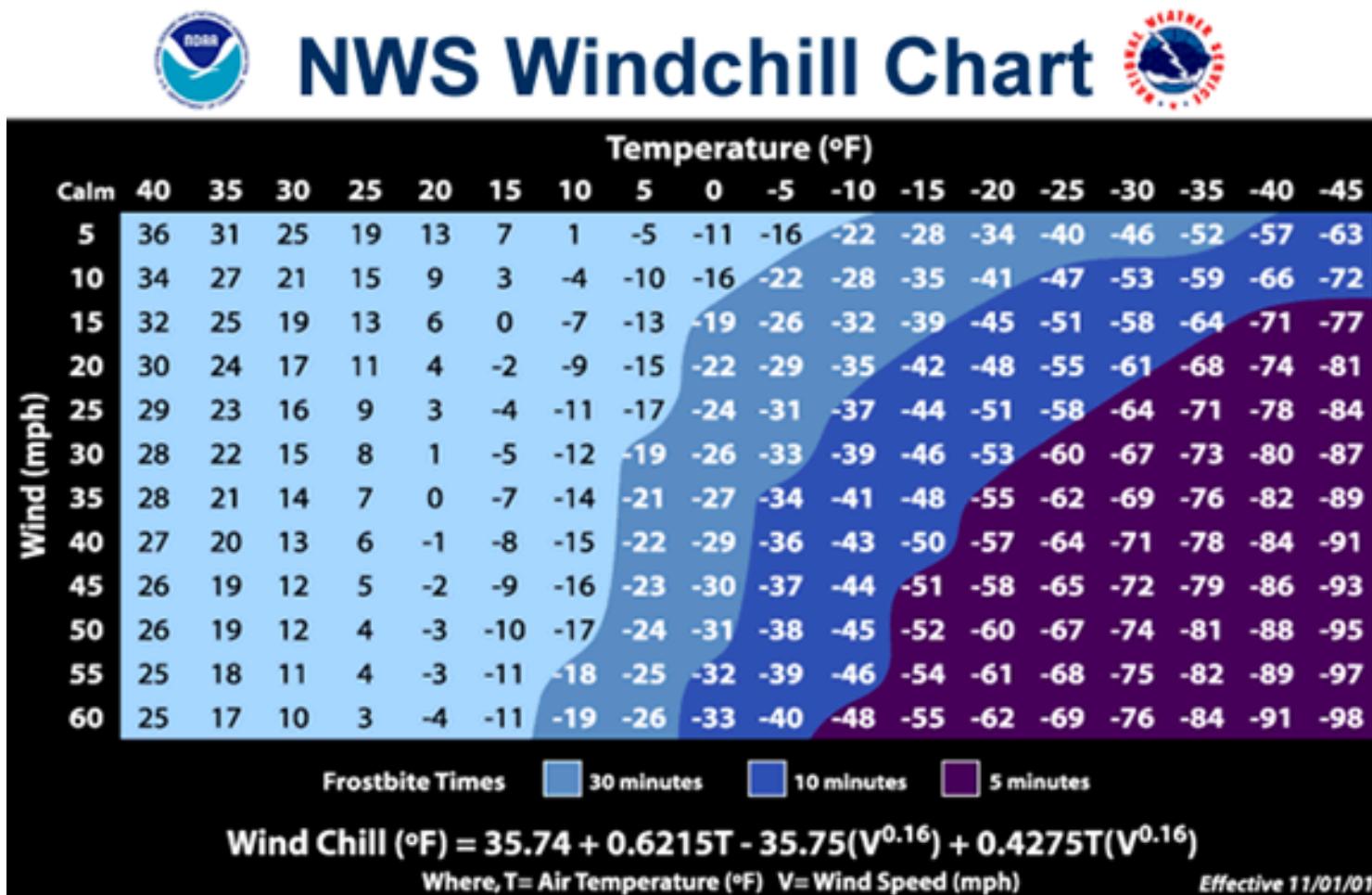
BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY PROGRAMS

Congratulations to the following for recently obtaining the Breastfeeding Friendly Designee:

Teri Brogdale
Olivia Folkes

UNDERSTAND THE WEATHER AND WINDCHILLS

Sometimes the temperature might be nice outside, but it's a little windy. What does that mean? Here is a chart from the National Weather Service that shows the real-feel temperature when it is windy and compares to frostbite times.



Wind-Chill

- 30 is chilly and generally uncomfortable
- 15 to 30 is cold
- 0 to 15 is very cold
- 20 to 0 is bitter cold with significant risk of frostbite
- 20 to -60 is extreme cold and frostbite is likely
- 60 is frigid and exposed skin will freeze in 1 minute





WINTER SCIENCE FUN

Homemade Snow:

- 1/2 bottle of white hair conditioner or a bottle of shaving cream
- 2-3 cups baking soda

Put your baking soda into a tub and then add the conditioner or shaving cream on top. First stir your snow ingredients together with a spoon. As it starts clumping, start mixing it up with your hands.

It is sooooo super soft to play with and can actually feel cold to the touch.

Adapted from www.redtedart.com

Frozen Bubbles

Pick a chilly day outside - at least 14 degrees or colder and not windy.

Directions:

- Add 2 tbsp of glycerin to 1 cup of warm water in a bowl, stir well
- Add 2 tbsp of sugar, stir until fully dissolved
- Add 3 tbsp of dish soap
- Now make a bubble to freeze: using a bubble wand, blow a bubble, then catch it back on the wand, lay it down gently to watch it freeze OR, put bubble solution on a tray and use a straw to blow bubbles into the liquid, then watch it freeze.

You are watching the inner most layer of water freeze. It won't last long, because the ice crystals will cause the bubble to crack and implode. But is super cool to watch.

Adapted from Clayton's Exploration Station on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDXghpoIjwQ>

CONGRATULATIONS NEW CHILD CARE PROGRAMS!

Broome School-Age Child Care

KCE Champions - Donnelly Elementary School

Chenango School-Age Child Care

YMCA - Greene

Chenango Family Child Care

Alexis Buell

