

# Geothermal Heating--Keeping the Children Warm and Healthy

**Outline Of Need:** Sidney serves as a major hub for employment to the surrounding rural areas and communities in Cheyenne county. Substantial growth in the service industry and Cabela's resulted in a rising number of people entering the workforce and a greater demand for childcare. The local daycare along with 21 in-home childcare providers could not meet the childcare needs of the increased workforce.

**How Rural Development Helped:** USDA Rural Development provided community facility direct loan funds of \$1,265,000 to the Cheyenne County Child Development Center that were leveraged with a Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care grant of \$10,000, a land donation worth \$25,400 from the Western Nebraska Community College, and local donations of \$80,000 for working capital to build a new childcare facility. A donation of \$5,000 built the children's library.

**The Results:** On November 1, 2002 the completion of "Here Wee Grow" Child Development Center in Sidney was celebrated. "Here Wee Grow" provides childcare services to approximately 150 children ranging in age from infancy to 13 years.

The near \$1.4 million, 10,400 square foot childcare facility staffed by 25 full time and 5 part time employees, offers a total of 10 classrooms (2 walker, 2 infant and 6 pre-school rooms), a multi purpose room, commercial kitchen and a tornado shelter room. The center features a geothermal heat pump and a geothermal loop system that warms the floors in the infant/toddler rooms keeping the children warm as they go about their days crawling and walking. Outside the facility are two age appropriate playground areas, one for infant/toddlers and another for preschoolers. Here Wee Grow Child Development Center is the largest childcare center funded by USDA Rural Development in Nebraska.



*"Since Sidney received the community facility loan for a new child care facility, we have been able to provide dependable and affordable child care for 200 families and have brought employment opportunities into the community. We are especially proud of Here Wee Grow's design. The loan allowed us to install a geothermal heat pump in addition to the unique in-floor heating for use on our infant and toddler rooms to keep our babies warm and healthy when they play on the floor. The quality is unmatched like anywhere else in the Midwest!"*

*--Carter Kokjer, Founding Board Member, Cheyenne County Child Development Center*

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*"The geothermal loop system provides a consistent temperature of 95-110 degrees in our flooring units for our infant/toddler rooms. It is super efficient, no pollution and safer for our environment and our children. It is a wonderful added addition for our children to be able to come in on a brisk and chilly day into a heated room with the comfort of a warm flooring system. I would strongly recommend the use of the geothermal loop system to benefit a business as it has ours."*

*--Rhonda Schuessler, Executive Director, Here Wee Grow Child Development Center*