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still have a potential need for 80,647 more slots. In Rice County licensed facilities have a capacity for 283 children but face a potential need of 212 additional slots.

Kuckelman said the greatest area of need in Rice County concerns infants and toddlers. She said for every child care opening in the county, there are 21-30 children who need that slot. The inability of the industry to meet child care demand is indeed the biggest obstacle to overcome, but the high cost of child care and challenges in the workplace interfere as well.

Kuckelman said average daycare costs in Kansas range from \$15,071 at day care centers to as low as \$8,630 for home-based care. Two-parent households spend 13.6 percent of their income on child care which Kuckelman said is considered overly burdensome by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).. DHHS estimates child care costs should not exceed seven percent to be effective.

She said in every survey that CCAKS has done with those in the workforce, child care challenges are reported in the areas of affordability, the availability of child care slots, and

matching up work schedules with child care spots.

She said respondents within the last month noted having to arrive late to work and leave work early as a common significant challenge. Half of the respondents at one company said they considered leaving their job due to child care difficulties and the majority of all respondents noted they would utilize child care services if they were offered.

Kuckelman said data indicates lost work productivity and lost tax revenue in the United States could cost the economy as much as \$122 billion per year. However, U.S. businesses are possibly losing \$23 billion per year due to the hiring costs incurred when an employee leaves and lost revenue due to insufficient care.

Additionally, the government possibly loses \$21 billion in income and sales tax because parents can't work or work enough which affects their earning potential and spending habits.

Many in the industry are now realizing that businesses and employers may need to rethink their benefit packages to better meet the child care needs of current and future employees. Poyser said federal

and state tax credits are available to companies who provide child care assistance for their employees, however, the credits have been underutilized in the past.

John Trowbridge of AGH CPAs and Advisors said the credits are not available to non-profit organizations but efforts are being made by legislators and other interested parties to find solutions to ease the strain in the workforce due to child care issues.

Poyser presented examples of how Kansas businesses and organizations have implemented child care benefits in the workplace. She said CCAKS does have surveys that can be given to employees concerning daycare needs. Once completed, the surveys are returned to CCAKS to be used to help direct the company in determining a program that will best work for them.

CCAKS provided some results of recent studies that have shown that businesses that invest in child care assistance for their employees can:

- Reduce absenteeism. On average 45 percent of parents miss 4.3 days of work every six months due to breakdowns in child care;

- Attract employees. According to a 2020 survey, child care is the most requested employee benefit by parents but less than 20 percent of working families have access through their employer;

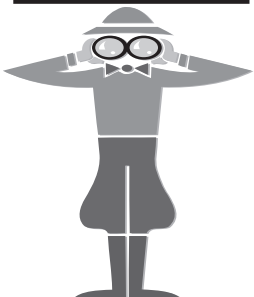
- Retain employees. In 2017, the turnover rate in the U.S. was 23.6 percent and it was estimated that hiring a new employee cost up to 2.5 times the employee's annual salary;

- Improve culture and morale. When employees miss work to care for their children, their workload often falls to other employees, which also takes a toll on company morale; and,

- Receive tax credits and deductions. A new tax credit will save Kansas employers up to \$45,000 on their state income tax if they provide child care benefits to employees.

Those interested in learning more about child care and the process of applying for state and federal credits can visit [www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org).

WANTED



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Reinhardt said he will be reaching out to the business community on a regular basis to determine what needs to be done to benefit both the district and the community. Many kids, he believes, will not be leaving the county after they graduate so developing a relationship with the business community will be necessary to prepare students for the future as they enter the local workforce.

Reinhardt said it will always be important for his staff to look for ways they can be more effective in the classroom. He said although there will always be obstacles outside of the classroom that will effect their success as teachers, he wants them to be accountable for the methods they use in the classroom.

“They can control the relationships they build with their kids, with the

people across the hall. They can control their instructional practices and the curriculum they use and the resources available to them,” he said. “That’s what we really want to focus on, helping our teachers become more impactful with our kids.”

The Reinhardt’s have three children. The oldest, Alexa, teaches fourth grade at Central Elementary school.

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**RICE COUNTY CLERK OPENING**

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*"The right of the people to keep a free & transparent press is obligatory for us citizens. Public notices belong in newspapers!"*

Leavenworth County resident

KansasPublicNotices.com

\*2024 Kansas State Study: Conducted by Coda Ventures

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