

Wiggles & Giggles



Owner: Tessa Moberg
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Sometimes plans change and, before you know it, life takes you in a different direction. That's what happened to Tessa Moberg. She was in college at Minot studying to be a social worker, when she decided that career field just wasn't for her. A lady in her hometown of Watford City suggested she come home and open a day care, instead. So, Tessa went back for her degree in elementary education with a kindergarten endorsement, and she came back home and did just that. But she had a little help. Actually, a lot of help.

While she was still in college, she couldn't come home much to work on the financing for her new business venture. So she talked with Gene Veeder of the Economic Development Council and Keith Olson with the Small Business Development Center in Williston. Tessa says, "They took it in their hands and went with it. They talked to the bank for me and worked on the financial package. Keith crunched all the numbers and Gene went to the Roughrider Fund and got me a community grant, as well as a five year interest buy-down loan. I remember the guy from the Roughrider Fund asked me if I really wanted to do this and I said I did. Then asked me if I would stay for the rest of my life and I said I would. Most 22-year-olds don't take on a big thing like this!"

Moberg didn't just open a day care; she bought a six-plex apartment building and converted it. She improved three of the upstairs units and rents them out; the other room is for babies. Downstairs, one side of the building is for toddlers; the other is for preschoolers. "We painted, put in new carpet, blinds and a suspended ceiling. We re-roofed and paved the parking lot. The bathrooms got new fiberglass and linoleum."

When Tessa says "we", she means her mom, dad, sisters, niece, husband and a couple of paid contractors. She couldn't afford to hire out all of the work, so there was a lot of sweat equity and volunteer labor put into Wiggles and Giggles day care center. She says, "People were always asking when I was going to open. It couldn't be soon enough. It was exciting for me to see how excited everyone was! It's nice to be your own boss and help the community."

So Tessa graduated in May 2007, got married in June, and opened Wiggles and Giggles in July. She has 35 children enrolled and eight employees—two full time and six part-time. She's had no problems finding employees because they can bring their own kids to work and pay a reduced rate of \$1 per hour for child care. Moberg says, "It's very busy right now. You take on many roles being a business owner in the small town; cleaning, bookwork, lawn care, etc. I don't have the budget to hire everything out. I spend many, many hours here!"

Tessa likes to keep busy, so she keeps the children busy, too. "We have circle time and work on preschool things. We go for walks to the fishing pond. We go to the park and library each week. During the summer, we go to the pool and out for ice cream. Some parents say their kids sleep 12 hours some night after a day at Wiggles and Giggles!"

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