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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Asteria Health Assumes Management of Wadena Area Childcare

WADENA, Minn. (July 6, 2026) — Astera Health is pleased to announce that, effective July 1, 2026, it has assumed management of Wadena Area Childcare, continuing the community's commitment to providing high-quality, reliable childcare for local families.

Wadena Area Childcare opened in 2025 through a collaborative partnership between MAHUBE-OTWA Community Action Partnership, the City of Wadena, Astera Health, and many dedicated community members who recognized that access to childcare is essential to the health and vitality of the region.

"Access to dependable childcare is one of the greatest challenges facing working families and employers alike," said Shelly Gompf, chief operating officer and vice-president of human resources at Astera Health. "We're honored to build upon the foundation established by MAHUBE-OTWA and our community partners. By managing Wadena Area Childcare, we are investing not only in children, but in the future workforce and overall well-being of our communities."

The transition in management will allow Astera Health to support the continued growth and long-term sustainability of the childcare center while maintaining its focus on providing a safe, nurturing environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive.

Wadena Area Childcare serves infants through preschool-age children and features licensed childcare providers, engaging learning experiences, nutritious meals, and age-appropriate activities designed to foster healthy development.

There are three providers currently providing childcare. They are:

- Emma Barthel: emmabarthel26fcc@gmail.com, 218-639-4438
- Keri Weiher: kkweiher@gmail.com, 218-296-0003
- Denise Lutze: deniselutze4@gmail.com, 218-639-8398

Families interested in learning more about enrollment or individuals interested in becoming a licensed childcare provider are encouraged to visit asterahealth.org/WAC or contact Brit-Awn Hess, program coordinator at 218-632-8189.

ABOUT ASTERA HEALTH

Astera Health is a private, not-for-profit health care system based in Wadena, Minnesota. It offers care services such as primary health, surgery, cancer care, diagnostic imaging, obstetrics, orthopedics and rehabilitation. Astera Health operates a hospital and medical clinic in Wadena, and serves the counties of Wadena, Todd and Otter Tail through five satellite clinics in Bertha, Henning, Ottertail, Sebeka and Verndale. Visit asterahealth.org.

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Photo Captions: Wadena Area Childcare is located in Astera Health's Legacy building.