



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

Nola Glatzel: Turning a passion into a business

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Nola Glatzel
Owner and Founder, Earthstar Play School

Small businesses are vital to the Lower and Outer Cape economy. Not only do they provide employment for year-round residents, many offer much needed services to the community. Earthstar Play School, founded by Nola Glatzel in 2019, helps to help address the region’s need for early education and childcare.

Nola grew up on the Outer Cape, but left home to attend school at Sarah Lawrence College just outside of New York City. Although she spent four years teaching in the city, she never felt connected. “A lot of people like living there, but it wasn’t really for me,” she recalls.

Nola became increasingly interested in outdoor education and took a job teaching at a farm in Upstate New York. Students would spend a week living and learning at the farm. They would share meals, take classes and learn about farming. This experience guided her decision to move back to the Cape in 2018.

Upon returning, she took a job as the town of Truro’s Afterschool Program Supervisor while also helping to babysit her niece. At this time, she rediscovered her passion for working with a much younger age group, and the idea for Earthstar started to come together. “There are just so few options for child care on the Lower and Outer Cape, that I knew there would be a market,” recalls Nola.

After developing her initial idea and setting her sights on opening her own school, things began to move very quickly. Renting in Truro is expensive and it can be difficult to find a place to open a new business. Fortunately, friends offered to let Nola open her new school in the basement of their home. “It all happened so quickly, they were still doing renovations when I started setting up.”



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After securing a location, Nola planned to open in the fall of 2019. She received her license from the Commonwealth and filled all six spots of her first season through personal connections. With the help of two parent volunteers, Earthstar had a very successful first fall. “I really wanted to put an emphasis on the free play aspect of the program, that’s why it is called play school.”

At the same time, Nola was participating in WE CAN’s GROW program offered in partnership with the CDP’s Business and Credit Programs. Like many entrepreneurs, Nola had the passion and knowledge for her business - providing children with a quality educational and play experience. However, like a lot of new small business owners, she needed assistance and training on how to run and grow her business.

The GROW program is designed to connect and empower women entrepreneurs to share resources and learn new skills. Because of her school schedule, she was put in the more advanced group alongside established business owners, and is very grateful for the support that she received. “I learned so many things I never would have even thought about,” recalls Nola, “I opened a business account and did cashflow projections.”

Nola’s success was short-lived, however, when the school was forced to close indefinitely when the Commonwealth shut down child care providers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “Initially there wasn’t really a lot of guidance or information about when I would be able to open again,” she recalls.

With her business closed and no income coming in, she reached out to Pam Andersen, the CDP’s Director of Business and Credit Programs. Nola was applying for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan, and wanted some assistance in determining whether it made financial sense for her to take out the loan.

She spent the summer working odd jobs with her dad, watching her niece, landscaping and building a children’s garden at the school. “I spent a lot of time reading the news and trying to forecast when I would be able to open up again,” she said.

Schools like Nola’s were able to reopen this fall under strict health and safety requirements that were outlined in an 80-page document released by the Department of Early Education and Care. She made a number of changes to her program such as: keeping the children distant, making sure each had their own personal play items, buying air purifiers, staggering pick-up and drop-off times, and hiring a professional cleaning crew. Unfortunately, many of these upgrades were costly, and Nola found herself in need of additional funds.

She learned about the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Micro-enterprise grant program from the CDP’s *Inside Scoop* small business newsletter. This program offers qualified small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic up to \$10,000 in forgivable loans. Nola started the application process in the fall, but unfortunately her business was too new to qualify. With the passage of the second CARES act this winter, the eligibility date was changed and Nola was able to apply.

Nola secured a forgivable loan to help cover expenses, make up for lost revenue, and even help pay an assistant. Despite the struggles over the last year, Nola is optimistic about the future. “I was able to fill all the spots just through word of mouth,” she says, “I think that there is always going to be a need out there.”



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The CDP remains dedicated to supporting small businesses like Nola's, which meet the needs of young families on the Lower and Outer Cape.

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