

https://www.journalgazette.net/local/babe-of-whitley-county-moves-into-a-new-crib/article_3019b2e6-8a54-4449-8f36-ccd21f1d75ef.html

FEATURED

BABE of Whitley County moves into a new crib

Sherry Slater | The Journal Gazette
Jun 19, 2025

1 of 2



Laura Tucker, executive director of BABE of Whitley County, shows the nonprofit's stockpile of diapers and wipes available classes designed to help them become good parents.

Courtesy

BABE of Whitley County is celebrating its move into a new crib.

The nonprofit will open its doors at 309 W. Van Buren St., Columbia City, next week with a ribbon-cutting and community baby shower.

“This move has been a labor of love for our team,” said Laura Tucker, executive director. “It’s more than just a new address. It’s a fresh start, a bigger space for connection, and a stronger foundation to serve local families for years to come.”

BABE assists pregnant women, mothers and children through age 5 by providing childhood necessities to those who attend nutrition classes, prenatal doctor’s appointments and other activities that support young families.

Each visit to library story time, a vaccination clinic or other partner provider results in a coupon that can be exchanged at BABE for diapers, wipes, car seats, clothing, toys and other items. The nonprofit distributes more than 40,000 diapers a year, for example.

The organization’s lease was unexpectedly terminated two years ago, prompting a fundraising campaign last year with the goal of \$175,000. Soon after the effort was announced, BABE exceeded its goal thanks to a \$125,000 gift from the Chapman Charitable Trust, a \$50,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Whitley County and donations from various individuals and businesses including Steel Dynamics Inc.

Andy More, president of More Farm Store Inc., offered BABE a long-term lease in the front of the former Redman Plumbing and Heating building in downtown Columbia City. His company will occupy space in the back of the building.

“BABE is truly an asset for families here in Whitley County and needed a new location to expand their services,” said More, a former Community Foundation board member. “The renovation of the old Redman building helps restore a piece of Columbia City history while also helping the families BABE serves.”

The nonprofit used the money raised during last year’s campaign to pay for updating the rental space. In exchange for the building improvements, More is allowing the nonprofit to go rent-free for the next eight years, Tucker said.

At slightly more than 2,000 square feet, BABE’s new space is “perfect,” Tucker said. The leasing arrangement “is fantastic,” she added.

For now, BABE is open only on Wednesdays and Thursdays from noon to 5:30 p.m. Tucker said she hopes to add another day or extended evening hours. She runs the nonprofit with a store manager and one full-time volunteer.

Most days that BABE is open, it is hosting a class or other activity, such as craft time, music and movement, or nutrition advice.

“The classes are really well-attended,” Tucker said. “The parents love them.”

BABE was founded more than 20 years ago in response to “a record number of babies being born with very low birth weights” in Whitley County. As of 2019, Whitley had improved its percentage of low birth-weight babies to the second lowest in the state, according to its website.

Now, the nonprofit annually serves about 1,200 moms, babies and toddlers. BABE is dedicated to ensuring every child in Whitley County has the best possible start in life, the website says.

As part of the grand opening celebration, the Community Foundation of Whitley County will match all cash donations to BABE up to \$5,000 total, doubling the impact of every gift.

Donations can be made online at www.babewc.org/donate.

“We are overwhelmed with gratitude for the support that made this new space possible,” Tucker said. “It’s more than a new home for BABE, it’s a symbol of what our community can do when we come together.”

sslater@jg.net

If You Go

If You Go

Who: BABE of Whitley County, a nonprofit that supports pregnant women, mothers and children from newborn through age 5

What: Grand opening and community baby shower with SnoBalls Hawaiian Shaved Ice, balloon animals and prize giveaways

When: Noon to 5 p.m. June 26

Where: 309 W. Van Buren St., Columbia City

Request: Guests are encouraged to bring a gift that will be passed along to a client family

Sherry Slater

Assistant Desk Editor