

# Day care issues strike Richardton

*Bryan Horwath | The Dickinson Press | Published September 27, 2012*

RICHARDTON — Day care service, or a lack thereof, is a big issue in western North Dakota and the town of Richardton has not been immune to those challenges, a number of its residents said Wednesday.

About a dozen concerned members of the Stark County community showed up to a public forum hosted by the group Vision West ND at Richardton-Taylor High School designed for citizens to voice concerns over quality of life and economic issues in the fast-growing region.

A consortium of 19 oil- and gas-producing counties, Three Affiliated Tribes, energy associations, educational institutions and regional councils, Vision West ND will host public forums in Belfield and South Heart today before finishing its Stark County tour this week with a steering meeting at the Strom Center in Dickinson on Friday.

“One of our biggest day care providers recently moved and it’s been a struggle for some our families to find day care,” said Richardton resident Donna Reich.

Answering the recent public outcry for day care services, Vision West will host a statewide Child Care Summit Oct. 2 in Bismarck. Other issues brought up Wednesday night were the lack of a police presence (the town relies on Stark County for law enforcement services), aging school facilities, and a lack of dining and entertainment destinations.

Residents seemed to agree that housing was available and relatively affordable, but Richardton-Taylor High Principal Russ Ziegler said the district was beginning to see dwindling enrollment numbers.

“We need to find a way to keep families here,” Ziegler said. “We’re transitioning over to a new population. Kids aren’t staying on the family places nearly as much. They’re moving on.”

District 36 State Representative Shirley Meyer attended the event, which was facilitated by Karalea Cox, a plan facilitator and consultant contracted Vision West.