

MILESTONE MOMENTS

For the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning



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A NOTE FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GEORGIA'S EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS
OF THE YEAR

A DECADE OF STARS:
REGIONAL CELEBRATIONS

Dear Friends of the Foundation,

Since the last Milestone Moments newsletter, we at the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning have been busy. We named six Early Childhood Educator of the Year finalists, and from this group, identified three winners in infant, toddler, and preschool categories. It's been a joy to surprise, congratulate, and reward these educators with well-deserved recognition.

We have also continued celebrating Quality Rated's 10th Anniversary focusing awareness on and understanding of Georgia's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). It's hard to believe that it's been a decade since DECAL began rating child care programs. As we think back, we are grateful for the 126 child care programs across Georgia who initially chose to participate in Quality Rated. Today, high-quality child care is within reach of all Georgia's young children, and families are equipped with information to find the kind of care they want for their child(ren). To learn more about high-quality child care in your community, visit qualityrated.org.

In the coming year we intend to leverage new, strategic opportunities that will maximize the Foundation's support of the far-reaching and comprehensive services offered by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Please stay tuned!

Thank you for supporting our mission.

Gratefully,

Laura



Georgia's Early Childhood Educators of the Year



In December 2022, we recognized the Early Childhood Educator of the Year winners for 2022-2023. The winning infant educator is Mary Williams, with Kid's Express Learning Center, a 3-star Quality Rated child care learning center in Hawkinsville; the winning toddler educator is Elianne Aguilera with Eli's Academy, a 3-star Quality Rated family child care learning home in Lawrenceville; and the winning preschool educator is Tierra Faulcon with Faulcon Prep Academy, a 2-star Quality Rated family child care learning home in Smyrna.

These exemplary teachers were selected through a rigorous application process that included a classroom observation conducted by a trained team of evaluators. As Early Childhood Educators of the Year, these teachers will share effective classroom practices with other Georgia child care professionals in presentations, meetings, and conferences.

The Foundation awards each teacher a check for their personal use and each school a check for a classroom makeover and travel stipends. The Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning is grateful to the Naserian Foundation for making these awards possible.

We look forward to learning from these Educators of the Year in the months ahead!



Quality Rated 10th Anniversary: Regional Celebrations

In late 2022, the DECAL team and many of our partners traveled across the state to continue celebrating Quality Rated's 10th Anniversary. We kicked-off the festivities at Truist Park, with thousands of spectators at the Braves game. DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs threw out the first pitch, and several leaders of the Quality Rated team appeared on the field!



A few weeks later, we traveled to Dalton where we recognized the first set of our "Class of 2012" child care providers who were among the first to become rated when Quality Rated was launched. We also recognized our first "Community Star Award" recipient, Dixie Kinard, who helped lay the foundation for community engagement around early childhood education in Dalton. While in Dalton, we toured two Quality Rated child care programs to showcase elements of quality with members of the community and of the local press.

In November, we convened a large group of "Class of 2012" providers at a breakfast reception in Clarkston. In addition to highlighting these providers and key partners like the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students and the Georgia Family Connection Partnership, we also recognized former Governor Nathan Deal for his exceptional leadership in charging DECAL with the task of creating a QRIS for Georgia.

Our final local celebration was held in early December in Valdosta. Like our visit in Dalton, we visited two Quality Rated child care providers in the community, and we presented our Community Star Award in South Georgia to former Valdosta Mayor John Gayle, who brought much attention to Quality Rated providers during his "Read Across Valdosta" campaigns.

Though our regional celebrations have concluded, we look forward to more positive surprises in store for our Quality Rated Child Care providers in early 2023!



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