



early childhood community development centre

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Local Educators and Volunteers Honoured in Special Ceremony

St. Catharines: Forty-Five educators, volunteers and students working within Niagara's early learning sector received recognition last evening at the 20th Annual Awards of Excellence celebration at the Holiday Inn & Suites in St. Catharines. The event was coordinated by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC) and featured a Roaring Twenties Gala to celebrate "*It's a Roaring Good Time to Be a Child in Niagara*".

Over 350 individuals were in attendance at the awards evening sponsored by Louise Kool & Galt, one of Canada's leading suppliers of classroom resources and equipment. Nine local businesses also supported the event, including: PenFinancial Credit Union; A Child's World Family Child Care Services of Niagara, Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds, St. Catharines Standard; YMCA of Niagara, Pathstone Mental Health, Minuteman Press Niagara, Meridian Credit Union and Jackson Triggs Winery. Many other local businesses contributed items for the silent auction fundraiser. The ECCDC extends deep gratitude to 105.7 EZ Rock for Lori Love's appearance as event emcee and for the entertainment provided by The St. Francis Jazz Band of the Niagara Catholic District School Board and Fascination Dance Studio.

The ECCDC was pleased to include a new award category at this year's ceremony: **Nurturing Children's Connections to Nature Award**. This award recognizes an educator who encourages and supports children to foster a sense of wonder and sense of place within the world through their unique connections with nature. This year's award winner was: Susanne Robitaille of Rosalind Blauer Centre for Child Care.

Various longstanding awards were also presented, including: **The Contributor Award for Volunteers and Colleagues**. This year's award winners included: Michelle De Moel, Laura Rasmussen, Rosemary Martin, Helen Lake, Lori Bell, Sandra Noel, Kathy Ballantyne, Ramona Cronkwright, Cheryl Henry, Wendy Manwaring, Mona Mitchell, Robynn Mooney, Kathleen Morales, Kerri Rogers, Marisa Siew-Bowyer, Alexandria Szwec and Chelsea Townsend. Brooke Borland was recognized by Niagara College's Early Childhood Education Program for the **Margaret Hamilton Graduating Student Award**. **The Brock Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Outstanding Student Award** was proudly presented to Jamie Barratt, Louise Lesser, Kristin Gregory, Mary Rothwell, Andreia Madaleno and Rebecca Cyr. Kathy Paul was this year's recipient of the **Eco Friendly Child Care Practices Award** sponsored by Niagara Region, while Amy Cassibo was honoured for Speech Services Niagara's **Emergent Literacy Award**. **The Kindergarten Team Award** was presented by the Niagara Catholic District School Board and the District School Board of Niagara to Allison Szalai and Nancy Ricci, Kristy Penlington and Melissa Futino, and Carolyn Bolduc and Jen Cohoe for their outstanding kindergarten partnerships. **The Licensed Child Care Administrator Award** was presented to Jackie Kerry. **The Commitment to Continuous Professional Learning Award** was presented to Samantha Beuparlant for her outstanding dedication to ongoing development and community collaboration. Tammy Dolinski, Gloria Hincapie, Margaret Moffatt and Brett Richards were recognized in the **Family Support Program Practitioner Award** category, and the **Quality Child Care Niagara Exceptional Program Award** recognized Rosalind Blauer Centre for Child Care for their outstanding contributions. Lastly, **the Early Childhood Educator Professionalism Award** was presented to Katherine Calcott, Christian Dignard, Natasha Freitas, Maria Howell, Helena Kaminski, Nicole Rasmussen and Pam Young for exemplifying the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and the four foundations of *How Does Learning Happen*; Ontario's pedagogy for the early years.

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