

*Celebrate the Joy in the Journey:  
Honouring the Achievements of Early  
Learning Professionals in Niagara*

## **2024 Niagara Early Learning & Child Care Awards of Excellence**

November 28, 2024

presented by  
Early Childhood Community Development Centre



primary event sponsor  
Louise Kool & Galt



## Welcome & Greetings

### Greetings from the Board & Staff Team of the Early Childhood Community Development Centre

On behalf of the ECCDC's Board and Staff Team, we would like to express our gratitude to you for attending this year's Awards of Excellence Celebration! It is an honour for us to have the opportunity each year to coordinate this valuable event in recognition of the important work you do each day. This year, as we celebrated your achievements, we took time to reflect on the passion and commitment that you bring to your daily work. We are thankful to be able to support you in offering high quality early learning experiences for Niagara's children and families. We would also like to extend heartfelt congratulations to all of this year's award winners. Your remarkable efforts and accomplishments are certainly something to be proud of and contribute to the overall quality of Niagara's early learning programs!

ECCDC Board and Staff Members shared a poem called "A Second Home", written by Sherri Hirschboek:

This isn't only a child care program, it's like a second home.  
The children aren't only cared for, you love them like your own.  
They learn life lessons every day, strong values you reinforce.  
You make the learning fun with play, your spirit sets their course.  
They love the way you read to them, and sing those silly songs.  
In the special place that you create, they feel that they belong.  
So thank you from deep within our hearts, for words cannot express.  
The gratitude we have for you, and the important work you do best!



# Welcome & Greetings

Thank you to the following guests for offering greetings during this year's event. We are grateful for your ongoing support Niagara's early learning and child care community!

- **Chris Bittle**, Member of Parliament for St. Catharines: [click here to view video](#)



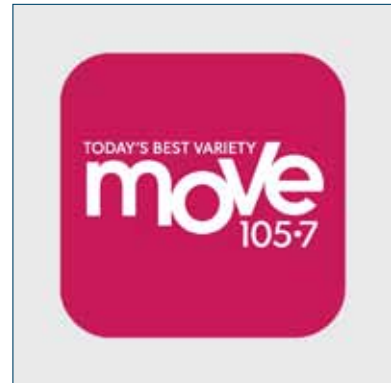
- **Minister Jill Dunlop**, Ontario Ministry of Education: [click here to view video](#)
- **Jennie Stevens**, Member of Provincial Parliament: [click here to view video](#)  
*Congratulations to all the recipients and nominees of the 2024 Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence! Your professionalism, dedication, and passion for working with our youngest populations enrich the lives of families in the Niagara community. Thank you for the expertise and care you bring to shaping young minds and building a strong foundation for lifelong learning. It is an honour to celebrate your accomplishments and the invaluable role you play in fostering excellence in early education.*
- **Jim Bradley**, Chair, Niagara Region
- **Terry Ugulini**, Mayor of Thorold
- **Satinder Klair**, Director of Children's Services, Niagara Region
- **Megan Robinson**, Manager, Six Nations Polytechnic
- **Courtney Scott** and **Erica Hylands**, Métis Nation of Ontario
- **Beth Deazeley**, Registrar & CEO, College of Early Childhood Educators
- **Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario**  
*The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario is honoured to have this opportunity to recognize the important work of Niagara's Early Learning and Child Care community. We are so happy to "Celebrate the Joy in the Journey" with you and hope that you feel valued and appreciated for all your achievements and successes over the past year. This year has brought many positive changes but also challenges as we learn and grow through the implementation of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care program to the continuing effects from the COVID 19 pandemic – and you have shown exemplary leadership and achievement as professionals and as a sector. You have truly demonstrated your values - creating connections for children, families, and each other every day. Congratulations and thank you for all that you do.*
- **Kelsey Henderson**, Interim QCCN Coordinator and **Melissa McLauchlan** and **Katherine Martin**, QCCN Advisory Committee: [click here to view video](#)
- **Angela Hayes**, Early Childhood Education Program, Niagara College
- **Dr. Sandra Della Porta** and **Jaime Barratt**, Faculty of Education, Brock University
- **Jackie Van Lankveld**, Manager of Clinical Services, Niagara Children's Centre



## Entertainment

### Event Emcee

We were delighted to welcome back Aiko Iwashita of Move 105.7 Niagara to emcee this year's event!



### The Strong Water Singers and Taylor Barber

Thank you to the Strong Water Singers for their special performance to open the 2024 Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence celebration! We would also like to extend gratitude to Taylor Barber for offering incredible musical entertainment during the dinner hour!



## Sponsors

The Early Childhood Community Development Centre is grateful to the following businesses for their generous financial contributions to the 2024 Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence celebration. We appreciate the support of our sponsors in celebrating Niagara's early learning professionals for the amazing work they do each day. Your contributions to this event are reflective of your recognition of the passion and commitment that educators have for supporting children and families in Niagara.

### Primary Event Sponsor: Louise Kool & Galt | [www.louisekool.com](http://www.louisekool.com)

For more than 60 years, Louise Kool & Galt has worked alongside Canadian educators with a goal to provide quality resources, furniture, classroom equipment and early years materials.

We are delighted to celebrate the ongoing commitment and accomplishments of Niagara's early learning community at this year's Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence as the Primary Event Sponsor!

We are also grateful for our longstanding partnership with the Early Childhood Community Development Centre, and wish them much continued success.

We also wish to congratulate all of this year's award winners! Thank you for the valuable work you do to support children and families in Niagara!



## Sponsors

### Black Box Sponsor

Little Ones Lunches

### Wine Draw Sponsor

Mountainview Building Group

### Gold Sponsors

A Child's World Family Child Care Services | CIBC | YMCA of Niagara

### Silver Sponsors

District School Board of Niagara | Niagara Catholic District School Board

### Guest Favour Sponsor

Westland Greenhouse Solutions

### Bronze Sponsors

Skycomp Solutions | Danima Creative Group



# Sponsors

## Silent Auction Donors

We are grateful to the following businesses for their generous donations to this year's Awards of Excellence Silent Auction!

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Americana Waterpark Resort & Spa | Art Gallery of Ontario          |
| Beechwood Golf Club              | Bird Kingdom                    |
| Brand Blvd.                      | Brock Golf Course               |
| Buffalo Bandits                  | Buffalo Bisons                  |
| Buffalo Sabres                   | CAA Niagara                     |
| City of Niagara Falls            | City of St. Catharines          |
| Colour Connections               | David's Tea                     |
| Helen's Deli                     | Horse Play Niagara              |
| JM Rocks                         | Lindt Chocolates                |
| Mr. Mikes - St. Catharines       | Niagara College Teaching Winery |
| Niagara Ice Dogs                 | Niagara Parks                   |
| Niagara River Lions              | Outlet Collection at Niagara    |
| Pla-Mor Bowling Lanes            | Shaw Festival                   |
| The Keg – St. Catharines         | Upseat                          |
| Vermeers Garden Centre           | YMCA of Niagara                 |





## Award Presentations

Congratulations to each of the individuals and programs recognized for their extraordinary accomplishments at this year's Awards of Excellence celebration!

### EarlyON Child and Family Centre Practitioner Award

This award category recognizes a staff member from an EarlyON Child and Family Centre in Niagara that have made a significant influence in the program while supporting the Four Foundations of *How Does Learning Happen?*

Lori Bailey  
DSBN EarlyON Child & Family Centre



Meghan Thomson  
YMCA of Niagara EarlyON Child & Family Centre



### Eco-Friendly Child Care Practices Award

This award, sponsored by Niagara Region Children's Services, honours an early learning and child care program for demonstrating eco-friendly practices in all areas of its operations.

A Child's World Administration Team



### Margaret Hamilton Student Award

Presented by the Niagara College Early Childhood Education program, this award commends a graduating student who has excelled in both academics and field placements and who is likely to make a major contribution to the early learning and child care profession during the course of his or her career.

Kylee Woodward





### Commitment to Continuous Professional Learning and Community Collaboration Award

Sponsored by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre and Niagara Region Children’s Services, this award category recognizes a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) who demonstrates remarkable efforts in the pursuit of ongoing professional learning opportunities, as well as engages in ongoing activities for the benefit of developing strong, collaborative relationships with community partners.

Sharon Alakas, YMCA of Niagara



### Exceptional Volunteer & Support Staff Award

This award commends the outstanding efforts of volunteers and support staff who make outstanding contributions to the success of Niagara’s early learning and child care programs.

Lauren Durham  
YMCA Child Care –  
Durdan/Loretto



Kristin Fields  
Fort Erie Regional  
Child Care Centre



Jade Gilbert  
YMCA Child Care



Tiana Hull  
YMCA Child Care -  
Grapeview



Phadya Lucien  
Centre éducatif La Boîte à soleil -  
Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeys



Rachael Paquin  
A Child’s World –  
Lookout Ridge



## Exceptional Volunteer & Support Staff Award continued

Gillian Peters  
Child's View Child  
Care Services



Madeline Roberts  
YMCA Child Care – Our Lady  
of the Holy Rosary



Ben Root  
Welland Regional  
Child Care Centre



Madison Zelichowski  
A Child's World –  
Lookout Ridge



Margie Lagesten  
Strive Niagara – Welland Parent  
Child Care Centre



Kim Cole  
ECCDC Board Chair



## Nurturing Children's Connections to Nature Award

Sponsored by Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds, this award recognizes a program who, through their design of the early learning environment and by supporting children's natural curiosity, helps to nurture their connection to the natural world.

Fort Erie Regional Child Care Centre





## Early Childhood Educator Professionalism Award

This award category recognizes Registered or Designated Early Childhood Educators (RECEs/DECEs) who model professionalism and excellence in applying Ontario's Early Learning Framework, *How Does Learning Happen?* in his or her daily work.

Fuzia Abuhadra  
YMCA Child Care – Our Lady  
of the Holy Rosary



Katherine Calcott  
Strive Niagara



Tricia Flynn  
YMCA Child Care - Parnall



Lorraine Klassen  
YMCA Child Care –  
Glynn A. Green



Taylor Amirault-Ettinger  
YMCA Child Care –  
William Hamilton Merritt



Desiree Costiff  
A Child's World – Lookout Ridge



Alicia Gauvin  
Branscombe Early Learning  
& Family Centre



Zavian Lashington  
YMCA Child Care



Stephanie Barton  
Grandview  
Community Daycare



Christina Fera  
St. Catharines Regional  
Child Care Centre



Jennifer Gerona  
YMCA Child Care – Our  
Lady of the Holy Rosary



Katie McNevin  
Maple Crest Early School





Early Childhood Educator Professionalism Award continued

Hannah Meiring  
Niagara Region Child  
Care Centres



Adelina Milanovic  
Trail Ridge  
Montessori School



Sam Miller  
Niagara Region Child Care



Montana Noel  
YMCA Child Care



Sandra Rees  
YMCA Child Care –  
William Hamilton Merritt



Cornelia Schupp-Fitzpatrick  
ACW - Ross



Heather Stephen  
A Child's World - Ross



Laurie Stines  
Centre éducatif La Boîte  
à soleil - Fitch



Jessica Triemstra  
YMCA Child Care – Our  
Lady of Fatima Grimsby



Natalie Ventresca  
Centre éducatif La Boîte à soleil –  
Nouvel Horizon



Madeline Welch  
YMCA Child Care –  
Father Fogarty



### Kelly Albanese Child Care Program Inclusion Award

Sponsored by the Special Needs Resourcing Leadership Team, this award recognizes a child care program which demonstrates exceptional inclusive practices within their program.

Port Dalhousie Nursery School



### Kindergarten Team Award

This category commends teams who make outstanding contributions to strengthening Full Day Kindergarten in Niagara through the demonstration of the fundamental principles of Full Day Kindergarten amongst children and families.

Diamond Trail Public School



Harriet Tubman Public School



Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Elementary School - Grimsby



**Licensed Child Care Centre Administrator Award for Exceptional Leadership and Commitment**  
Sponsored by the Niagara Child Care Sector Executive Committee, this award honours an exceptional administrator of a licensed child care centre who demonstrates a high level of skill and commitment in his or her administrative role.

Heather Lacey



**Licensed Home Child Care Professionalism Award**

Sponsored by Niagara Region, this award recognizes the outstanding practices of home child care providers.

Dianne Dayboll  
Niagara Region Licensed  
Home Child Care



Lesley McNeil  
Niagara Region Licensed  
Home Child Care



Holly Smith  
Niagara Region Licensed  
Home Child Care



**In Memory of our Early Learning Colleagues Who Have Passed**  
Presented by: Ellen Cressman, Boys & Girls Club of Niagara

Melissa Ingham





## With Gratitude

The Early Childhood Community Development Centre wishes to offer our sincere thanks to many individuals and businesses for their support of the 2024 Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence. Your commitment to this year's celebration is valued as we honour the achievements of Niagara's early learning and child care community.

- **Satinder Klair and Niagara Region Children's Services**
- The **Team at Club Roma** for their venue coordination
- **2024 Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence Planning Committee:**

Barbara Dykstra – A Child's World Family Child Care Services

Kristy Penlington – District School Board of Niagara

Lisa MacKay – District School Board of Niagara

Olivia O'Reilly – YMCA of Niagara

Nikki Knol – Niagara Region

Stephanie Perdue – Niagara Region

Whitney Hall – Strive Niagara



If you would like to share your suggestions for next year's Awards of Excellence award categories, celebration plans, or if you are interested in participating on the 2025 Awards of Excellence planning committee, please contact the ECCDC at [eccdc@eccdc.org](mailto:eccdc@eccdc.org)

To receive a copy of any award winner photos, please connect with us at [eccdc@eccdc.org](mailto:eccdc@eccdc.org)

