

For Immediate Release: November 26, 2015

Local Early Learning & Child Care Professionals Honoured in Special Ceremony

St. Catharines: More than 45 Registered Early Childhood Educators, volunteers, full day early learning programs and students received recognition on Thursday November 19 at a special awards ceremony at the Holiday Inn & Suites in St. Catharines. The ceremony was part of the **19th Annual Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence celebration** and was coordinated by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC).

There were more than 370 people in attendance at the medieval masquerade, sponsored by Louise Kool & Galt, one of Canada's leading suppliers of classroom resources and equipment. Eight local businesses also supported the event, including: Gold Level Sponsors A Child's World Family Child Care Services of Niagara, Meridian Credit Union, and St. Catharines Standard; Silver Level Sponsors PenFinancial Credit Union, the YMCA of Niagara, and HiMama Inc.; and Bronze Level Sponsors Future Access Inc., Minuteman Press, and the University of Guelph-Humber. Dozens of other businesses contributed items for the silent auction fundraiser. A new fundraiser introduced this year was the Masquerade Black Box draw, whereby guests purchased a box with the chance of winning either a gift certificate or the grand prize: a Coach bag! We thank our business sponsors for supporting this exciting draw; PenFinancial Credit Union and Minuteman Press. The ceremony was hosted by Lori Love of 105.7 EZ Rock and musical entertainment was provided by harpist Carol Farrar.

A new awards category, the **Early Childhood Educator Professionalism Award** was introduced at this year's ceremony. This award recognized a Registered Early Childhood Educator who models excellence in demonstrating professionalism and applying the College of Early Childhood Educators *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and Ontario's Early Learning Framework *How Does Learning Happen?* Educators recognized in this category were Amy Cassibo, Brittany Lynds, Jacqueline Dunlop, Kristin Dunphy, Natalie Galajda, Sarah Pirri and Jacquie Rodgers.

Various long-standing awards were also presented during the evening, including the **Contributor Award for Volunteers and Colleagues**, recognizing individuals who make outstanding contributions to Niagara's early learning and child care programs in a volunteer or support role. This year's recipients included: Marc Bovine, Elaine Edwards, Lynn Hooper, Julieth Hurtado Lopez, Mirabella Ion, Wayne Komsa, Wendy Manwaring, Sue McDonald, France Proctor, Roxanne Rivard, Heather Scott, Lea Shivts, Kristin Smeets, Jodi Sproule, Tammy Stanley, Tracey Steele, Jane Taylor, Carole Turcotte, Kate Vaughan & Kristina Wyr cimaga.

Kelly O'Connor was recognized with the **Margaret Hamilton Graduating Student Award**, presented by the Niagara College Early Childhood Education Program to a student who has excelled in both academics and field placements. The **Brock Bachelor of Early Childhood Education Outstanding Student Award** was proudly presented to Natalia Rapita to recognize her efforts in demonstrating the standards of practice and ethics of care in both academic pursuits and contributions to the early childhood community. Grapeview Daycare was the recipient of the **Eco-Friendly Child Care Practices Award**, sponsored by Niagara Region and granted for incorporating eco-friendly practices within child care programs. Pam Koudijs was honoured through the **Emergent Literacy Award** which is sponsored by Speech Services Niagara and recognizes a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) who demonstrates strong emergent literacy skills throughout the day and in all areas of the classroom.



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The Full Day Early Learning Team Award is presented by Niagara Catholic District School Board and the District School Board of Niagara for outstanding achievements in ensuring that Niagara's Full Day Kindergarten Programs offer exceptional opportunities for children, families and educator teams. Recipients honoured in this category were Amy Canning, Melissa Philip, Michael Folino, Mary Schmagala, Rachel Gignac, Jessica Lafleur, Sheila Irokoze, and Elizabeth Wood for their outstanding contributions. The Niagara Child Care Sector Executive Committee was pleased to recognize Véronique Emery with the **Licensed Child Care Administrator Award**, a tribute that is granted for demonstrating a high level of skill and commitment within an administrative role as outlined by the *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators*. The Early Childhood Community Development Centre and Niagara Region Children's Services were pleased to sponsor the **Commitment to Continuous Professional Learning Award** to Ashley Bélanger for going beyond the expectations outlined in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, for demonstrating a commitment to continuous professional learning, and valuing the importance of developing strong, trusting relationships with families, colleagues and community partners. Tammy Harris, Lori Pavone and Linda Rodriguez received the **Family Support Program Practitioner Award**, recognition for making exceptional contributions to Family Support Programs and Ontario Early Years Centres across Niagara. Lastly, the **Quality Child Care Niagara Exceptional Program Award** was presented to A Child's World – Tiny Travellers for surpassing all of the requirements of Quality Child Care Niagara while engaging children in new and innovative learning opportunities.

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