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Once Upon A Time: Celebrating the Story of Niagara's Early Learning and Child Care Community

St. Catharines: More than 75 Early Learning Professionals, volunteers and students received recognition last evening at the 23rd Annual Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Awards of Excellence celebration at the Holiday Inn & Suites St. Catharines Conference Centre. The event was coordinated by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC).

There were close to 375 guests in attendance at the Storybook Gala, with primary event sponsor **Louise Kool & Galt**, Canada's leading suppliers of classroom resources and equipment. Seven local businesses also supported the event, including: **Platinum Level Sponsors the District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board, Gold Level Sponsor YMCA of Niagara; Silver Level Sponsors A Child's World Family Child Care Services of Niagara and Minuteman Press Niagara and Entertainment Sponsors Beatties and Mountainview Homes.** Many other businesses contributed items for the silent auction fundraiser. The ECCDC is also grateful to the many community partners who sponsor awards and support this valuable event.

The ECCDC was pleased to have **Tami Jeanneret** of 105.7 EZ Rock emcee the event. We would like to extend gratitude to 105.7 EZ Rock for sponsoring her attendance. The entertainment for the evening was provided by **Fascinations Dance, Violinist Danielle Marconi and Musician Ryan Brousseau.**

A wide variety of awards sponsored by community partners were presented. **The Licensed Home Child Care Professionalism Award** was presented to Judy Coote, Stephanie Dougall, Farkhanda Khan, Kristy Korten and Diana Medina. La Boîte à soleil - Fitch was honoured with the **Kelly Albanese Memorial Inclusion Award** for their outstanding efforts to incorporate inclusive practices within their daily activities. **The Contributor Award for Volunteers and Colleagues** winners included: Kathryn Ballantyne, Karina Brisbois, Danielle Carbert, Katarzyna Dec, Connie DeSousa, Rebecca Ferguson, Jennifer Ward, Cheryl Garceau, Goodwill Niagara, Sylvia Han, Patricia Johnson, Kamrun Khan, Johanne Laverdiere, Noreen Lee, Lauren Luciani, Joanne Martel, Nicole Menard, Fraser Morgan, Roots of Empathy Partners Leanne Forsyth-Sells and Susie Palumbo, Seaway Mall Management Team, Pierre Seguin, Adam Stewart, and Nonie Wenzel. A Child's World – Woodlawn was the recipient of the **Eco Friendly Child Care Practices Award**, while Bobbi Caddick was honoured through the **Emergent Literacy Award.** **The Kindergarten Team Excellence Award** was given to Melissa Jackson, Tara Rost, Kim Edwards, Carly Jones, Pam Koudjis, Linda Kraliz, Jennifer Bouchard, Sherry Pepin, Marianne Amodeo, Nicole Aubin, Melissa Chamberlain, Katy Douglas, Maria Grossi, Claudia Pascale, Mark Perrotta, Deborah Wilsher and Beth Wood, and Christina Clark was honoured through the **Licensed Child Care Administrator Award.** **The Commitment to Continuous Professional Learning Award** was extended to Jessica Kulikowsky. Erryn Goddard, Tiffany Grant and Leigh Williams were recognized in the **EarlyON Child and Family Centres Practitioner Award** category, and the **Quality Child Care Niagara Exceptional Program Award** recognized Top of the Ridge Daycare. A Child's World – Niagara Community was honoured in the **Nurturing Children's Connection to Nature** category, and **The Early Childhood Educator Professionalism Award** was presented to Finlay Blakelock, Marsha Case, Natalie Chieca, Isabel Flores, Chevelle Fowler, Jennifer Havens, Joanne Janzen, Marie-Josée Lafreniere, Tara Langaraap, Marie-Eve LeBreton, Hayley Lyon, Carole Maude, Brenda Morris, Anabela Rocha, Sherry-Lynn Ross, Abbie Scheffold, Krystine Simpson, Lisa Skilnik, Jackie Sullivan, and Rebecca Wills. **The Margaret Hamilton Graduating Student Award** was presented to Lenna Uhryuk for excelling in her academic studies.

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The ECCDC is a charitable organization inspiring excellence in early learning and child care through thought leadership, cutting edge training, innovative resources and coaching services highlighting best practices and emerging trends. In the more than 20 years since its creation by local volunteers, the ECCDC has become Canada's leading early learning training, resource and referral organization.