



Kari Williams



Kari Williams received Iowa AEYC's Educator of the Year Award this September. The Iowa AEYC Educator of the Year Award is granted to one Iowa AEYC member each year who has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of care and education of young children in his/her role as teacher, teaching assistant, or child development home provider; working directly with young children, ages birth to age 8.

Educator of the Year Bio and Synopsis

Kari Williams makes a positive impact everyday on the early childhood field. She has worked for more than ten years at Head Start and has many years of community service. She volunteered in a Head Start classroom as a single parent of a preschool age child. Originally hired as a cook at the Presbyterian Head Start program she transitioned from part-time cook, to center-aide, to teacher associate. She finally found her calling as a lead teacher.

As a full-time mom, wife, and student, Kari always finds it within herself to give to all of her students. She has the devotion and charisma necessary to provide a safe, fun environment where children learn mutual respect and fairness. Her classroom is structured in a way that encourages positive interactions and active engagement. She creates a climate where children feel confident in their abilities to learn and work with others. She does an exceptional job as a leader, communicating with families, colleagues, and community members.

Kari serves on the early Childhood Advisory council for the early childhood program at Northeast Iowa community College and is enrolled in the Elementary Education program at the University of Dubuque. She advanced her career by continually increasing her skills and knowledge. She is sought out by peers and administrators for her knowledge of Head Start and early childhood.

Kari is always striving to improve the lives of those around her. Her passion for helping children and families is apparent to all who encounter her. She is highly skilled at working with those who need additional resources to better their lives and those of their children. Parents and children connect to Kari with an unbreakable bond. She truly helps build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Kari's Member Spotlight Q&A

How did you get started in your profession?

When I first became employed with Head Start, I started as a sub. I was just looking for a job at the time. Not sure what I wanted to do for a career. I soon became hired on as a center aide/transportation aide. I then moved into a cook's position. It didn't take me long to realize that I loved working with preschool age children, and decided to make it my career. I became very motivated to work my way to a teaching position. I have been with Head Start for 15 years, and am a lead teacher. I will be graduating in May with my BS in elementary education, with endorsements in special education, reading (k-8), and early childhood.

What advice would you give to someone starting their career in early childhood education?

When you are getting started in early childhood education, remember there are many rewarding challenges that come with the career. Always stay positive, and remember you touch every one of the children's lives you come across.

What's your favorite part of being an Iowa AEYC member?

I love getting updates about what is going on with early childhood education and changes that may be coming. I also enjoy the resources they offer to help me become the best educator I can be.

What NAEYC/Iowa AEYC benefit do you MOST value?

Print subscriptions to Young Children or Teaching Young Children

Why did you become a member?

I was encouraged to join from my director and a friend that is a member. They explained the benefits that come along with the membership.

How many years have you been a member?

This is the first year that I have been a member.

What is your favorite association memory?

I have attended the fall convention twice now, and both times were very informational, and enjoyable.

Why did you decide to enter the early childhood education field?

I have a heart for wanting to help others. I enjoy seeing the smiles on the faces of the children I work with, and knowing that I am making a difference in their lives. I also love the relationships I build with the families I work with.

What are some accomplishments you are particularly proud of?

When it comes to my accomplishments that I am proud of, I would have to say being promoted to a lead teacher in the Head Start program, completing my education while working full time, being a full-time mother of four, and being nominated the 2017 educator of the year.

Tell us something fun about yourself, such as a hobby, a favorite thing, a quote you love, etc.

When I have free time, which isn't often, I love to go for family drives. We like to get into the car with no destination in sight and just drive. Many times, we end up at a park, or by the river, but we are together as a family and have a lot of laughs during our journeys.

What is your favorite children's book, and why?

My favorite children's book is "I Love You Forever, I Love You for Always". This is a book that I had read to all my children as a good night story when they were little.