

May 2011

Partnership holds annual banquet

Three local child care facilities and two child care professionals were honored Tuesday night by the Richmond County Partnership for Children at the annual Child Care Professional Appreciation Banquet.

Precious Hands Daycare received Home of the Year award, and Sandhills Children's Center and Margie's Treasure Chest both were named Center of the Year. Pam McDonald of Roberdel Baptist Preschool was named Outstanding Teacher, and Rhonda Moses of Little Kingdom Child Care received the Kathy Alexander Positive Attitude Award.

Precious Hands was nominated by Alice Covington, whose daughter attends there. "I have witnessed a huge improvement in my 4-year-old in the year that she has attended," she said. Not only has her daughter learned her ABCs, counts to 50 and knows her colors, her ability to share and take turns has greatly improved, Covington said. "This home facility is wonderful."

Jennifer Blake nominated the Sandhills facility, saying her son "is ready for kindergarten, thanks to all the caring staff." Blake's son has special needs, and the teachers and assistants at Sandhills "have made it possible for him to learn and receive services according to his needs in an inclusive classroom setting." Blake touted the successful interaction of children with and without special needs to learn and play together in class.

In nominating Margie's Treasure Chest for Center of the Year, Wendy Blanton said, "My daughter has attended this day care for two years, and I couldn't ask for a better place. She has learned so much.

"As a parent, it means a lot when you are able to leave your child to go to work and you know there is someone who is there to take care of them just as you would," she added.

As Outstanding Teacher, Pam McDonald is "a kind,

creative and sincere educator," according to Corey Davis. "I always found her helpful and supportive of her students. Her rapport with children is natural and instinctive. My child blossomed as a learner while in her class."

Jessica McLendon nominated Rhonda Moses for the Positive Attitude Award, saying "Ms. Rhonda has the most inviting and outgoing personality. All the kids love her. It doesn't matter if Ms. Rhonda is having a bad day, you will never know it."

More than 150 teachers attended the annual banquet, which also recognizes teachers who advanced their child care education as well as child care facilities that raised their star ratings in the last year.

"Child care in Richmond County is quality child care, and the increased star ratings of the child care facilities and the increased education levels of the teachers prove it," said Martha Vance Brown, executive director of the Partnership. North Carolina uses a five star rating program to evaluate facilities on program standards and staff education.

Two Richmond County child care homes increased their ratings during the last year. Romper Room and Kiddie Korner both increased from 3-stars to 4-stars.

"We're proud that our facilities are dedicated to providing the best care to children whose parents cannot be at home during the day," Vance Brown said. "These facilities and their teachers provide loving care to our children so that parents can work outside the home. Parents have to be comfortable with the people who are giving daily care to their children – who are, in essence, substituting for them during the day so they can work."

Fourteen teachers were honored for educational achievements during the last year. "We encourage

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teachers to further their education, to improve the quality of teaching in Richmond County child care centers and homes,” said Michell Kocan, administrator of Child Care Avenues, a program of Richmond County Partnership for Children. “But going to school while working full-time is very difficult, and we want to salute our teachers’ efforts to gain higher education and a better understanding of children’s needs,” she said.

Earning bachelor’s degrees were Gretchel Ellerbe (Sandhills Children’s Center), Angela Horne (Cordova Pre-K), Kaitlynn Mohn (Little Kingdom) and Jean Douglas (Union County Community Action Head Start).

Earning associates degrees in early childhood education were Temeka Everett (Sandhills Children’s Center),

Jennifer Dumas (Sandhills Children’s Center), Kimberly Nicholson (South Hamlet Head Start), Lauren Gaddy (Little Kingdom), Rhonda Moses (Little Kingdom), Tanua Bethea (Fayetteville Street Head Start) and Sylvia Moore (South Hamlet Head Start).

Earning associate’s degrees in applied science were Darlene Montgomery (South Hamlet Head Start) and Gwendolyn (South Hamlet Head Start). Sheri Haith (Fayetteville Street Head Start) received a North Carolina Teaching License.

For more information on child care services in Richmond County or the Richmond County Partnership for Children, call (910) 997-3773.