



Pennsylvania Association for the
Education of Young Children

For Immediate Release

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National Early Education Expert Visits Accredited PA Child Care Program and Speaks at Advocacy Event

ELIZABETHTOWN, PA (March 31, 2023)— Michelle Kang, chief executive officer of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) visited Pennsylvania to tour an accredited early childhood care and learning program and speak at the annual gala of the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC).

Kang toured Elizabethtown Child Care Center, which became nationally accredited by NAEYC in the mid-1980s and is also a Keystone STARS level 4 program, demonstrating the site has met the highest standards of program quality. As Kang toured the site, she played with the children and learned about the high-quality early childhood care and learning services being offered to the children from the teachers and staff.

Elizabethtown Child Care Center serves 100 children ages 6 weeks to sixth grade, including children whose families receive child care subsidies. They employ 31 teachers and staff. Center Director, Christina Kalyan, indicated, "We could serve 30 more children if we could employ more teachers." Pennsylvania and the nation are in the midst of a dire child care staffing crisis due to low wages in the sector. The average pay for a child care teacher in Pennsylvania is under \$12.50/hour, which results in teachers and staff leaving programs and prevents individuals from entering the field. The crisis is constricting access to child care for children and families in Pennsylvania with more than 30,000 children on waiting lists for programs, according to a recent Start Strong PA survey.

"It filled me with great joy to witness the developmentally appropriate environment created by early childhood educators and staff at Elizabethtown Child Care Center, " said Kang, "it was evident that children are seen, held, loved, nurtured and supported. This is the kind of early learning environment we wish to make accessible for every child across Pennsylvania, and the nation, yet we know that without the sustained, substantial financial investment necessary to advance a diverse, well-prepared and well-compensated early childhood profession, early childhood educators will continue to subsist on poverty-level wages, while parents continue to struggle to afford the child care services they need in order to work, attend school, and fully contribute to our society."

The day was capped off with Kang's keynote during PennAEYC's annual gala to celebrate the 2023 Voice for Children Awards. The event celebrated the following four early childhood professionals.

- Voice for Children Award - Dr. Jean C. Allison, PhD, Associate Professor of Early Childhood, Delaware County Community College
- Voice for Children Award - Linda D. Grinage, Founder & CSO, Blessed Assurance Christian Early Learning Center
- Voice for Children Distinguished Career Honoree - Rebecca Lentz Gorton, Administrator Emerita, Northampton Community College.
- Voice for Children Distinguished Career Honoree, In Memoriam - Dr. Rae Ann Hirsh, Program Director, Early Childhood Education Department, Carlow University

PennAEYC's Voice for Children Award is the only statewide award in Pennsylvania recognizing the grassroots leaders whose work impacts the quality of care for young children in diverse settings. The "Voice" Award celebrates not only the individual award recipients, but the early childhood profession.

"With our Voice for Children Award, PennAEYC recognizes the critical role advocacy plays in high-quality early care and education settings and celebrates those who speak on behalf of Pennsylvania's children," said Jen DeBell, Executive Director of PennAEYC. "As the "Voice" for early childhood care and learning, community advocates are an invaluable component to assuring all Pennsylvania's children get the start they deserve in school and life."

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The Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children is a statewide, nonprofit membership organization of over 3,500 early childhood care and education professionals. As the Pennsylvania affiliate of NAEYC, we are part of a network that includes 52 affiliates and nearly 60,000 individual members nationwide. Through policy development, advocacy and professional development and supports for early childhood professionals we work to achieve the vision that each and every Pennsylvania family will have access to high-quality, affordable early childhood care and education opportunities for their children provided by a profession that is valued, well-compensated and supported. PennAEYC is a proud principal partner of the Start Strong PA and Pre-K for PA nonpartisan, statewide advocacy campaigns to increase access to high-quality, affordable child care and pre-k.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children is a global association dedicated to high-quality early learning for all children, who stressed the importance of the work early care and education professionals do each and every day and its positive impact on children and families and our communities.