



2021

# STAFF APPRECIATION

## AWARD WINNERS



**Child  
Development**  
CENTERS Inc  
*Educating Children To Succeed*



# STAFF APPRECIATION —

2021



Each year, Child Development Centers, Inc. (CDC) celebrates its hardworking employees with Staff Appreciation awards to recognize their passion, dedication, and significant contributions to the education of youth in our community.

While all CDC employees are highly valued as they provide high-quality services to children enrolled in our centers, these awards highlight individuals that have remained noticeably committed to our mission of “Educating Children to Succeed.”

Whether it be through direct interaction with children or impactful work to promote our services, these employees have gone above and beyond in their roles.

This commemorative publication serves to celebrate accomplishments and rejuvenate the team for another successful year ahead.

Included in this special edition newsletter are narratives about each of this year’s award recipients on behalf of their co-workers and Chief Executive Officer Rina Irwin.





# KELLY REAM

Angelfish Lead Teacher | Franklin School-Age Center

## I AM THE MISSION AWARD

In 2010, Child Development Centers established its annual "I Am The Mission" Award to recognize an employee for personal and professional excellence, and to encourage staff members to strive for greatness. This award pays tribute to an employee whose exceptional performance in our child care and early childhood learning environment merits special recognition.

The "I Am The Mission" Award goes to a member of our team who exemplifies CDC's mission of "Educating Children To Succeed." During its years of existence, the award has been given in acknowledgement of many qualities that have distinguished the honorees, including the following:

- o Exceptional nurturing and teaching skills
- o A child's written description of one of our staff members as "the best teacher I ever had"
- o Classroom experience, creativity, reliability and dedication
- o Being a role model in work ethic, attitude and desire to teach children
- o Being a "go-to person" in one of our centers
- o A pleasant approach to work, exceptional relationship skills, and trustworthiness
- o Earning the admiration and trust of the children's families

One of CDC's 2021 I Am The Mission Award winners once was a new, struggling teacher who has become a competent, self-confident instructor who exemplifies our mission of "Educating Children To Succeed." Her transformation was, according to our Curriculum Specialist, "inspirational and very marked," as she grew to master the curriculum and armed herself with strategies for instruction and managing behaviors. Like some teachers, this individual initially placed all children in the phonological stage, skipping invented spelling as well as developmental stages occurring before invented spelling. However, indicative of her development as a teacher, she later revised her emergent writing practices, and as a result, her young learners today are using invented spelling independently. Those who are ready are writing phonologically, some independently and some with minimal assistance from her. This honoree "is a success story and an asset to CDC. She has increased student achievement with developmentally appropriate practices. Her willingness to admit mistakes and to grow from them is to be commended."

According to her Center Director, the children in this award winner's preschool classroom already are reading and writing. "Her play plans were top notch, which helped to develop language arts skills with those children. She also has gone above and beyond to build relationships with the parents this year, especially with being unable to actually see them due to COVID restrictions. She has formed an amazing bond with the children and families in her classroom. The children have become better learners because of it."



Sharing this year's I Am The Mission Award is the Assistant Teacher in the same classroom. To quote her Center Director, the Assistant "has formed bonds with the children that will last through out their learning careers. She has made it her mission to know all the children in the classroom inside and out. I believe that this Lead Teacher and Assistant are like the two sides of a coin. They balance each other out. When one is low the other works double to make sure the children never sense anything is different. While the Lead Teacher was in quarantine due to COVID, the Assistant ran the classroom as though the Lead was there, and the children never missed a beat with the curriculum and the learning path that they were on. That shows that the Assistant, just like the Lead, is committed to CDC's mission of "Educating Children to Succeed."

**"I believe that this Lead Teacher and Assistant are like the two sides of a coin. They balance each other out. When one is low the other works double to make sure the children never sense anything is different."**

## BECCA NEWSOME —

Angelfish Assistant Teacher | Franklin School-Age Center

## I AM THE MISSION AWARD

Also important to note is that this award-winning Assistant Teacher also leads a school-age classroom after school and during summer, all the while exhibiting the engagement and leadership skills that she learned from Bob Ritter, who received CDC's first I Am The Mission Award in 2010.



Achieving the CDC mission of "Educating Children to Succeed" requires many attributes that both of our award winners demonstrate every day in their center and beyond. No CDC staff member exemplifies the qualities that our Mission Award recognizes more than this year's recipients. It is my honor to present our 2021 I Am The Mission Award to 2 members of our Franklin School-Age CDC staff, Angelfish Lead Teacher **Kelly Ream** and Assistant Teacher **Becca Newsome**.

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up, and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!" After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..." I made a difference for that one."



## STACY HOWZE

Gilson Staff Member | Gilson Center

### STARFISH AWARD

Making a difference for one is what CDC's Starfish Award is all about. This award pays tribute to a CDC staff member who understands that every child is created equal, that every child is one-of-a-kind, that every child has a purpose and a destiny unlike that of any other, that every child needs a safe, healthy environment in which to grow and learn, and that every child benefits from warm welcoming relationships.

The Starfish Award honors a CDC caregiver or teacher who greatly values every single child in his or her classroom, who sets firm boundaries for each one, and who has high expectations for each young learner based on each child's capabilities. The award also recognizes this employee's desire to instill in every child a healthy personal identity, strong social, emotional and behavioral skills, positive values, and a lifelong love of and commitment to learning.

The Starfish Award salutes the recipient for his or her love, security, support, direction and instruction that may profoundly impact a child – even one child like the last starfish that the little boy released back into the ocean – and that may help to create for that one young learner a pathway to a bright future. Finally, the award pays tribute to a CDC employee who demonstrates every day his or her commitment to help our children grow up to become healthy, responsible, successful adults.

This year's CDC Starfish Award winner exemplifies our mission of "Educating Children To Succeed." She always exhibits a positive attitude toward our enrolled children and her co-workers, is calm and supportive with our young learners and families, and seeks to make a connection with each child so that he or she feels important.

"I never have seen her in a bad mood or complain," her center director says. "She has done and will do everything that is asked of her."

**"I never have seen her in a bad mood or complain. She has done and will do everything that is asked of her with a smile."**

She moved from assistant teacher to float when one of our rooms was closed. She became the third staff member in another room when there were some behavioral concerns there, went back to being a float and doing mentoring, then went into another classroom when a staff member was out for three weeks."

With all these changes in assignment, there was "not one complaint" from her, according to her center director. "She always did what she was asked with a smile." Our honoree never makes any unexpected call-offs, and she covers in Century CDC's classrooms when they are short staffed. "She has been amazing this year," her center director said.

For making a difference among our young learners – just like the little boy who tossed the starfish back into the surf – the recipient of CDC's 2021 Starfish Award is a Gilson CDC staff member, **Stacy Howze!**

# CHARITY BROWN

Orioles Lead Teacher | Oil City Center

## THE BUTTERFLY AWARD

*"There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it's going to be a butterfly." "The caterpillar does all the work, but the butterfly gets all the publicity." "Just like the butterfly, I too will awaken in my own time."*

These quotations about butterflies remind us that these beautiful insects aren't born with their brilliant colors and delicate wings. No, they must undergo a metamorphosis through which a worm-like caterpillar that crawls on its belly is transformed into a delightful winged creature whose graceful, fanciful flight inspires storytellers, poets and photographers.

In the earliest days of their lives, the infants and toddlers for whom our staff provides care are like caterpillars. Through the tender, loving care that they provide, our infant/toddler staff members are a vital part of the developmental process that ultimately will turn our little caterpillars into Monarchs, Swallowtails and other butterflies.

CDC's Butterfly Award, which we are giving in 2021 for the third time, is intended to acknowledge the significant role that our infant/toddler caregivers play in the lives of our youngest learners. The Butterfly

Award is given every year to a deserving member of our infant/toddler staff whose nurturing and teaching skills merit special recognition.



Our 2021 Butterfly Award winner did not initially join our staff as a teacher. She was hired in another role in which she fit right in and was so efficient that she was able to lend a hand in classrooms and very competently provide some breaks for staff. While she was in the classroom, it was evident that being a teacher was in her future. She then decided to work toward her CDA credential even while continuing her other role in the center. This year's honoree completed her CDA at an accelerated pace because she was so excited for the opportunity to be in the classroom with children. She eventually transitioned into an assistant teacher post and did such an amazing job that her Center Director, when a Lead Teacher assignment opened in another classroom, asked if she was interested in the position. With some hesitation, not yet entirely confident in her teaching skills, she accepted the job and embarked further on the journey that has produced an award-

**"She invested abundant time preparing lessons and followed them to fidelity. The children are engaged every second of every day. Every time I round with an employee, they all mention our award winner as being helpful to them and amazing at curriculum."**

winner teacher. Our Butterfly Award recipient developed age-appropriate lessons around themes and took home Creative Curriculum and learned how to use it effectively.

Managing an active set of triplets was among the many challenges that she has experienced, but she never has faltered or given up. "She loved those boys, and they knew it," her Center Director says. "She had her days of frustration and tears, but those boys learned so much from her." Once we began implementing the Infant Toddler Studies, our honoree's teaching skills grew rapidly. "She invested abundant time preparing lessons and followed them to fidelity. The children are engaged every second of every day. Every time I round with an employee, they all mention our award winner as being helpful to them and amazing at curriculum. And when I need someone in the kitchen, she always is willing to go back to her CDC roots and cook for our children. She plows through kitchen detail and often has much time to spare, which she spends helping others or deep cleaning the kitchen."

On most days during nap time, her Center Director continues, "I look down the hall and outside the door of her room, I see her elbow deep in her curriculum box with paper spread out all over the floor preparing for her children to succeed. She took a 5-page lesson plan and reduced it to a 2-page at-a-glance document. I'm going to share with all our infant/toddler staff to make the lesson plan less cumbersome."

It is my honor to present CDC's 2021 Butterfly Award to an extraordinary teacher and, for the second year in a row, a member of our Oil City Center staff: Orioles Teacher **Charity Brown**.

# DR. SCOTT CARTWRIGHT

CDC Director of Medical Services

## JAMIE JACOBY LEADERSHIP AWARD



This award is presented to a CDC staff member who exhibits strong leadership qualities that were instilled in this organization by Jamie Jacoby, who served on the CDC Board from 2003 to 2013. Being a leader is a mindset. It isn't about a title or a job, but it is a way of life and a commitment. It means coming to work each day with a passion to make a difference. It means doing the right thing when it may not be popular. It means having a positive attitude and a belief that a bigger purpose is at work. It means being a role

model to which others can aspire. It means seeing the vision of the organization to further the mission of Child Development Centers, Inc.

Jamie was a dedicated board member. She helped CDC with connections to school district personnel. She supported CDC in many events and faithfully attended board meetings to provide guidance and support to the CDC leadership. Jamie started her career as a kindergarten teacher at Valley Grove Elementary School, later moving to second grade. She was "volunteered" to be on our board by her Superintendent and graciously accepted, knowing the importance of early childhood education. From the beginning Jamie believed in CDC and the difference that the organization makes for young children entering kindergarten.

Jamie always was very supportive of CDC even on Staff Appreciation Day, where in the past she spoke to staff members about the importance of their jobs.

Then in 2006 her grandson enrolled at our Cranberry center. Jamie transitioned from board member to customer, seeing the difference that our center made for her own family.

When asked for her impression of CDC, Jamie offered the following thoughts:

- o Quality care for children
- o A home away from home for children and grandchildren
- o A bright and cheerful place for children to be
- o A loving and caring environment
- o A support system for families of all circumstances
- o An educationally-driven setting where learning is fun
- o Provides opportunities for children to create, explore and discover
- o Involved in the community and linked with local school districts
- o Lots of inviting materials and equipment for both inside and outside exploration
- o Attainment of Keystone Star-level excellence
- o A place to go and work where excellence is recognized and awarded.



In memory of Jamie, CDC presents the Jamie Jacoby Leadership Award every year to an individual who exemplifies the same leadership skills that Jamie did while she was a CDC board member.

Our 2021 Jamie Jacoby Leadership Award winner is a most valuable member of the CDC team whose co-workers variously describe this individual as follows:

- Has been a leader since joining our staff
- Strives to lead by example
- Makes tough decisions that no one else wants to make
- Leads by listening to the whole team and values staff members' input on any matter
- Truly cares about employees
- Always makes time for one-on-one talks and always has our backs whenever we have an idea or concern.
- Always reminds us to “do the right thing” and “make good choices”
- Always willing to give helpful advice, not only for our enrolled children but for our staff members and families.

In addition to these general examples of leadership excellence, there are many job-specific reasons why this individual is our 2021 Jamie Jacoby Leadership Award winner:

- o He spent countless hours of research on COVID-19 before and after the pandemic started
- o He pioneered ways at CDC to reduce exposure and disease spread while also respecting individual ideals
- o To set a leadership example, he was the first person at CDC to get vaccinated against COVID-19
- o With protective protocols that he advocated, CDC – unlike many child care centers and schools – maximized in-person learning and minimized closing classrooms and centers
- o He was instrumental in informing our staff about vaccines, the risks and benefits, and where employees could get immunized in all 3 counties that we serve.

Long before the pandemic started, our award recipient was instrumental in creating a comprehensive health services model that sets CDC apart from most Head Start and other early learning programs nationwide. We now have a seasoned, multi-disciplinary Health Services Team that includes, in addition to our honoree, a Doctor of Pharmacy, Licensed Practical Nurse, Speech/Language Pathologist and 2 support staff members. Never has our award winner's value been more evident than during the year-long COVID-19 pandemic. His presence has allowed CDC to safeguard our organization against the spread of the virus in a way that never would have been possible without his expertise available to us on an everyday basis. From the earliest days of the viral outbreak last winter – when he initiated an organization-wide awareness, education and prevention campaign – to the establishment of our COVID-19 Task Force, CDC's own coronavirus testing lab and our PA Department of Health approval as a COVID-19 vaccination site, he has ensured that we are doing everything we can to protect our enrolled children, families and staff from the virus, and to continue providing a high-quality early growth and learning experience for our young learners.

All in all, our award winner is a difference-maker who truly exemplifies the qualities that our Jamie Jacoby Leadership Award honors. Congratulations and thanks to our 2021 Jamie Jacoby Leadership Award winner, **Dr. Scott Cartwright.**

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# REBECCA CRANE

Collies Lead Teacher | East End Head Start Center

## PURPLE AWARD

When you mix red and blue, what do you get? Purple! Often associated with luxury, power, wisdom, creativity and magic, purple is the balancing color between red and blue's color psychologies. While red brings intensity, stimulation and energy to the color, blue brings relaxation, calmness and stability, and together they make purple the perfect balance of the two. Color Psychology says that purple "can have calming effects over the mind and nerves, it can be uplifting and can trigger creativity."

Purple also is the color associated with CDC's new school readiness initiative that is intended to maximize our young learners' preparation for kindergarten, elementary school and beyond. The goal of this effort is that our staff helps every child – based on Teaching Strategies Gold assessment data – to reach a developmental level that is a full color band (or, a full year) above his or her chronological age. In other words, our goal is that CDC's Head Start, Pre-K Counts, HSSAP and other pre-K learners, by the time they leave the preschool setting, already are developmentally performing and achieving at a high level, which greatly will increase the likelihood that they can succeed in their next school setting.

To honor our pre-K staff members for maximizing their young learners' kindergarten readiness, CDC in 2019 established a Purple Award that goes to the teacher or assistant whose students' assessment data most vividly illustrates that the children are prepared for school.

"For this year's award winner, the terms 'high quality' and 'intentional' come to mind," one of her co-workers says. "She may be clocked in for an eight-hour shift five days a week during the school year, however she puts in way more time throughout a calendar year with her dedication to our program, to the children and to families we serve. Every minute of every school day is planned to be intentional, even to the music that is played during transitions, which is directly tied to a Teaching Strategies GOLD objective. The classroom is child owned, and each child knows the routine and shows independence as he or she navigates throughout the day. If a need presents itself either from a child or a parent, this year's honoree is quick to help to implement strategies for success or provide the necessary resources."

Additionally, as part of our center family, "she is recognized during the rounding process over and over as being helpful and supportive as she offers insight based on her classroom and curriculum experience. Once we began our journey offering virtual classrooms, our Purple Award winner saw it as an opportunity and

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immersed herself into learning the Google classroom platform. Virtual learning has its challenges, but she pushed forward, creating highly engaging educational videos of the various components of the curriculum. She adapted her lessons to fit the needs of the students and families, and offered Google meets to help facilitate the learning process. She lives and breathes our mission of "Educating Children to Succeed."

Again in 2021, the recipient of CDC's Purple Award is from our East End Center in Meadville. Please join me in saying thank you and congratulations to **Rebecca Crane**.



# CAROL COURTNEY —

Center Director | Cascade Center

## I AM THE MISSION AWARD

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The “I Am The Mission” Award goes to a member of our team who exemplifies CDC’s mission of “Educating Children To Succeed.” During its years of existence, the award has been given in acknowledgement of many qualities that have distinguished the honorees, including the following:

- o Exceptional nurturing and teaching skills
- o A child’s written description of one of our staff members as “the best teacher I ever had”
- o Classroom experience, creativity, reliability and dedication
- o Being a role model in work ethic, attitude and desire to teach children
- o Being a “go-to person” in one of our centers
- o A pleasant approach to work, exceptional relationship skills, and trustworthiness
- o Earning the admiration and trust of the children’s families

Our 2021 I Am The Mission Award winner in Erie is an individual who joined the CDC staff with the highest level of enthusiasm. She became a CDC spokesperson for employees about following the CDC way of doing things and encouraged employees to embrace the change as a positive rather than a negative.

This individual embraces our Standards of Practice and Core Values of Student Achievement, Safety, Professionalism and Excellence. As a leader, she works one-on-one with employees to help them succeed. One of her favorite responsibilities as a manager is rounding, which she says “gives me time to engage and connect with my employees, and I love doing it.”

Other CDC leaders reach out to our award winner regularly with questions, demonstrating that she is a leader not only in her own building, but among our other Erie centers as well.

According to another Center Director, our award winner “puts her responsibilities as a Director before anything else. She has a positive attitude. She is a great mentor and role model to others. I also admire how she came to CDC and adapted quickly. While her experience with her previous employer gave her certain skills, she was ready to learn new skills and

ideas with CDC. For her, CDC was a new opportunity that she embraced rather than remaining in the past.”

This year’s Mission Award honoree also has a calm demeanor in all situations, which is a great quality of a leader. Her employees admire her and care about her. She is determined to oversee a high quality center where student achievement and school readiness are maximized.

Achieving the CDC mission of “Educating Children to Succeed” requires many attributes that our award winner demonstrates every day in her center and beyond. No CDC staff member exemplifies the qualities that our Mission Award recognizes more than this year’s recipient. It is my honor to present CDC’s 2021 I Am The Mission Award in Erie to Cascade Center Director **Carol Courtney**.

**“She puts her responsibilities as a Director before anything else. She has a positive attitude. She is a great mentor and role model to others. “**



# - ANGELA MUHAMMAD

Robins Lead Teacher | Cascade Center

## PURPLE AWARD

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Purple also is the color associated with CDC's new school readiness initiative that is intended to maximize our young learners' preparation for kindergarten, elementary school and beyond. The goal of this effort is that our staff helps every child – based on Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment data – to reach a developmental level that is a full color band (or, a full year) above his or her chronological age. In other words, our goal is that CDC's Head Start, Pre-K Counts, HSSAP and other pre-K learners, by the time they leave the preschool setting, already are developmentally performing and achieving at a high level, which greatly will increase the likelihood that they can succeed in their next school setting.

To honor our pre-K staff members for maximizing their young learners' kindergarten readiness, CDC in 2019 established a Purple Award that goes to the teacher or assistant whose students' assessment data most vividly illustrates that the children are prepared for school.

This year's Purple Award in Erie goes to 2 teaching team members who have created a positive and welcoming community of learners in their 3-year-old classroom. Every day, students are greeted with a smile and a "good morning" welcome. The teachers love to watch their students grow, change and learn. The Lead Teacher does a great job with the Creative Curriculum observation requirements. She is very enthusiastic in delivering the curriculum, which reflects in a 4.0 fidelity score! This teaching team includes a veteran Assistant Teacher who is supportive, knowledgeable

and willing to take on what is needed for the room to function successfully. Both of our Purple Award winners have been determined to learn new strategies from others and work to implement what they learn in the classroom for the benefit of the children.

**"They are a dynamic team and they are happy to learn new ideas and knowledge from others, which is why they continue to improve the quality of their classroom."**

According to their Center Director, “both employees are reliable and dependable. They are a dynamic team and they are happy to learn new ideas and knowledge from others, which is why they continue to improve the quality of their classroom.”

Another mark of quality in our honorees’ classroom, their Center Director says, is their work ethic. Both employees are hard working, caring individuals who want their 3-year-old children to achieve at a high level in preparation for their second year of preschool and their eventual transition to kindergarten, elementary school and beyond.

For this year’s Purple Award winners, relationships also are key. Not only have they formed meaningful relationships with

**“You can tell the children trust their teachers and come to them for any problems that may arise during the day or any questions they have. Their room is one where you walk in and can tell the teachers are there for the right reasons.”**

## CANDY SHUFESKY —

Robins Assistant Teacher | Cascade Center

### PURPLE AWARD

their young learners, they also have developed positive bonds with families. The Lead Teacher understands that parents are their child’s first teacher, and two of her own children know the importance of family support in early childhood growth and learning.

“In the time that I have spent in their classroom,” a co-worker observes, “the first thing you notice is their relationship. They work incredibly well together, which makes the room run smoothly. The Lead Teacher is prepared for her lessons and makes sure she is organized and ready. She has shown a lot of improvement between the first and second year. You can tell the children trust their teachers and come to them for any problems that may arise during the day or any questions they have. Their room is one where you walk in and can tell the teachers are there for the right reasons.”

With positive classroom experiences, engaging learning opportunities and support from families, children in our award winners’ classroom are well-prepared for kindergarten. Our Purple Award recipients lay the foundation for a love of learning, and they truly embody CDC’s mission of “Educating Children To Succeed.”

The recipients of CDC’s 2021 Purple Award are from our Cascade Center in Erie. Please join me in saying thank you and congratulations to our Robins teachers, **Angela Muhammad and Candy Shufesky.**



A gold-colored metal trophy shaped like a stylized bird in flight, with its wings spread. The trophy is set against a dark background within a circular frame.

# DOUG HERRLICH

CDC Director of IT and Transportation

## ON THE WINGS AWARD

When geese fly in formation, they create their own unique form of teamwork. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in their 'V' formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% more flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the 'V' and another goose flies point.

When a goose gets sick, or is wounded and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with their companion and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it can fly, or until it dies, and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with the group.

**“He is well respected for his strong work ethic, great attention to detail, and for effectively representing CDC inside and outside the organization with co-workers, vendors, contractors and others with whom we have relationships.”**

This fundamentally is a description of teamwork, how each member of a flock (in the case of geese) or a team (in the case of an enterprise like CDC) is called to serve various roles within the group that keep it moving toward its intended destination or goal. Whether we're talking about a flock or a team, the larger interests of the group quite often require that individuals set aside the benefit of one for the advancement of the many.

To recognize a CDC staff member for traits that exemplify those of some of nature's most recognizable and effective teams – qualities that are vital to CDC and our caregiving and educational mission – we established in 2019 a new honor that we have named our On The Wings Award.

CDC's 2021 On The Wings Award winner is a recognized team player whose role has been vital to the growth and the success of our child care and

early childhood learning enterprise. Some years ago while CDC grew beyond near-bankruptcy and was focusing intensively on quality improvement, this long-time staff member brought a unique combination of skills and experience to our organization. While we tripled in size over the past several years – from 5 centers in Venango County to 15 centers in Venango, Crawford and Erie Counties,



and from 140 employees to 400 – no one has played a more important part in equipping CDC to manage our growth, communicate with our co-workers, administer our grant-funded early learning programs, and ensure that our young learners arrive and depart safely from our buildings. While CDC has grown, he has had little time to rest, and as we soon will build 2 new centers in Erie, his support of those new facilities will be every bit as important as what he does for our existing locations.

To do his job well, our On The Wings Award recipient literally has been “on the wing” the past several years, logging thousands of miles of travel across the region while playing a key role in our greatly expanded outreach to young learners in northwestern Pennsylvania. He is well respected for his strong work ethic, great attention to detail, and for effectively representing CDC inside and outside the organization with co-workers, vendors, contractors and others with whom we have relationships. His competence in multiple disciplines has enabled CDC to undertake many projects in-house, sparing us from paying contracted labor costs. He continuously strengthens his skills by completing professional development opportunities that make him an even more valuable member of our team.

Our award recipient's performance was especially noteworthy during the past year, when we were forced to greatly alter our operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due in no small part to his efforts during the viral outbreak, including his tremendous support of employees who worked remotely and his oversight of massive changes in transportation logistics, CDC has continued during 2020 and 2021 to advance our mission of “Educating Children To Succeed.”

I know that our award winner prefers to stay out of the spotlight, but it is impossible to ignore his great value to CDC. So for the significant contribution that he makes in support of our growing enterprise, our young

learners and our staff, and for his 16 years of service, professionalism and leadership in the disciplines of information technology, buildings and grounds, transportation and playground safety, I am honored to present CDC's 2021 On The Wings Award to our Director of Technology and Transportation, **Doug Herrlich**.

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# CAT SULLIVAN

Administrative Assistant | Asbury Center

## ON THE WINGS AWARD

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**"She always is positive, kind and helpful. Her favorite part of the day is when she gets to greet the children and their families at the door in the morning. Her smiling face is the first thing that greets our children and helps get the day off to a good start for them."**

formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the 'V' and another goose flies point.

When a goose gets sick, or is wounded and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with their companion and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly, or until it dies, and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with the group.

This fundamentally is a description of teamwork, how each member of a flock (in the case of geese) or a team (in the case of an enterprise like CDC) is called to serve various roles within the group that keep it moving toward its intended destination or goal. Whether we're talking about a flock or a team, the larger interests of the group quite often require that individuals set aside the benefit of one for the advancement of the many.

To recognize a CDC staff member for traits that exemplify those of some of nature's most recognizable and effective teams – qualities that are vital to CDC and our caregiving and educational mission – we established in 2019 a new honor that we have named our "On The Wings Award."

The 2021 recipient of this award is an individual who so embraces and enjoys her job that it is obvious to anyone who comes to her center. Like the geese in our illustration, she pitches in wherever needed to keep her center headed toward its destination. She always is positive, kind and helpful. Her favorite part of the day is when she gets to greet the children and their families at the door in the morning. Her smiling face is the first thing

that greets our children and helps get the day off to a good start for them.

She's also a great communicator with the families. She finds out if children are riding the bus or the van in the afternoon, if mom or dad is picking them up, if a doctor's appointment is coming up, etc. When we opened our doors after being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this employee made hand-crafted masks for staff members who needed them. There probably isn't an employee in our building who doesn't have at least one mask she has made.

This staff member also has taken ownership of the stage in our center. She takes time to sort through the supplies and organizes everything on the stage to make it easier for employees to find what they need, not just for our staff, but all our nearby centers that may be looking for an item. She acted as a mentor for a fellow CDC employee who joined the staff at another of our other area centers.

Before school started and during winter break, our On The Wings award winner made signs to decorate the hallways. The day after most of our staff got COVID vaccinations, this employee made heating pads and decorated an inspirational cup for all of them. All these examples are just a few of the many reasons to recognize this year's award winner, who is an all-around great member of our center staff.

For the significant contribution that she makes in support of CDC, I am honored to present our On The Wings Award to a most valuable member of our Asbury CDC staff, **Cat Sullivan.**

# TAMMY HOOVER

Guppies Lead Teacher | Franklin Infant/Toddler Center

## STARFISH AWARD

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up, and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!" After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..."I made a difference for that one."



Making a difference for one is what CDC's Starfish Award is all about. This award pays tribute to a CDC staff member who understands that every child is created equal, that every child is one-of-a-kind, that every child has a purpose and a destiny unlike that of any other, that every child needs a safe, healthy environment in which to grow and learn, and that every child benefits from warm welcoming relationships.

The Starfish Award honors a CDC caregiver or teacher who greatly values every single child in his or her classroom, who sets firm boundaries for each one, and who has high expectations for each young learner based on each child's capabilities. The award also recognizes this employee's desire to instill in every child a healthy personal identity, strong social, emotional and behavioral skills, positive values, and a lifelong love of and commitment to learning.

The Starfish Award salutes the recipient for his or her love, security, support, direction and instruction that may profoundly impact a child – even one child like the last starfish that the little boy released back into the ocean – and that may help to create for that one young learner a pathway to a bright future. Finally, the award pays tribute to a CDC employee who demonstrates every day his or her commitment to help our children grow up to become healthy, responsible, successful adults.

This year's CDC Starfish Award winner exemplifies our mission of "Educating Children To Succeed." "Oh my goodness, she is amazing," a co-worker says. "Everyone refers to her as Grandma. Children flock to her as soon as she enters the room. She literally has to pick up her feet and watch where she puts them. Once she is seated, the children pile on her lap, over her shoulders, etc. She makes sure to kiss and hug all the children goodbye and tells them she loves them. Parents have told me multiple times that she is the reason they enrolled their infant in the center. She made them feel so welcome and was so warm and friendly. I have never known of a single person who had an issue with her, zero. As one of our older staff members, she obtained her CDA credential. She is very helpful to other staff members. She can make a game or activity out of anything (animals, blocks, balls). She is just very, very special!"

According to her Center Director, our Starfish Award winner "always is happy to see her children daily. If a child does not come to school, she gets concerned, wants to make sure that he or she is well taken care

of. All the children stop by to tell her goodbye before leaving. She tells me that being with the babies is the best part of her days. She shows much pride when she watches an infant complete a milestone. We had a 16-year-old mother bring her child here and she made a point to talk to the mother all the time to help her with any questions/concerns that she had about babies. Our Infant/Toddler Coach always comments to me about how wonderful she does with the babies. When the children are struggling with a development, she will work with them more to succeed. She is very dedicated to her children."

For making a difference among our young learners – just like the little boy who tossed the starfish back into the surf – the recipient of CDC's 2021 Starfish Award is Franklin CDC staff member **Tammy Hoover!**

**"When the children are struggling with a development, she will work with them more to succeed. She is very dedicated to her children."**



# MICHELLE COLLINS

Center Director | Cranberry Center

## CDC LEGACY AWARD

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the word "legacy" as a "...bequest...something received from a predecessor or from the past." Many organizations have established Legacy Awards to memorialize individuals of historic significance to their enterprises and to pay tribute to persons who make a difference today in various ways, including the following:

- o Setting an inspirational example for others to follow
- o Exemplifying leadership that mirrors that of a founder or other organizational icon
- o Creating lasting change and measurable difference in an organization or community
- o Leaving an enterprise better than the honoree originally found it
- o Accumulating an admirable record of service to an organization
- o Passing along their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the generations that follow.

In recognition of qualities like these, CDC in 2019 established our own Legacy Award that pays tribute every year to one of our shining stars for his or her extraordinary contributions to our organization, and for making CDC a better provider of child care and early childhood education.

If you have been with CDC for any length of time, you will not be surprised to learn the recipient of our 2021 Legacy Award. This year's honoree exemplifies every one of the qualities that this award recognizes. When she joined our staff as a Teacher, it soon became clear that she had skills to be a leader and Center Director, which she has been for most of her CDC career. She has been with us long enough that she has nurtured and taught 2 generations of young learners, now including some of her former students' children!

Her co-workers describe our Legacy Award winner personally and professionally as follows: "one of the kindest souls you will ever know," a "very thoughtful person" who always takes time to check in, a "very fair person who makes sure that she treats everyone the same," a "doer, helper and good leader," a "quiet leader," and a patient individual with a

positive attitude that is evident when she says "well, we're just gonna make it work!"

Her fellow employees also portray her as a positive role model both on and off the job, a fabulous co-worker and mentor with whom it is easy to collaborate, an eager learner," a "staunch advocate for children," and a driven professional who puts in extra time to ensure that children receive high-quality care and education in her building, which has one of the highest enrollments organization-wide. "Even now when I drive by the center on a Sunday afternoon," a co-worker says, "I see her car parked there."





Our Legacy Award recipient further earns the admiration of her fellow staff members for rising above challenges that she has faced in her own life, and as a person of faith who “regularly prays for those in need.”

She played a key role in her center’s achievement of both state and national recognition of program quality, including a Star 4 rating from Pennsylvania’s Keystone STARS educational quality improvement initiative and NAEYC accreditation. These are marks of excellence that her center has maintained without interruption ever since they were attained. As CDC has ventured over the years into state and federal grant-funded early learning programs like PA Pre-K Counts, Early Head Start and Head Start, she likewise has welcomed and successfully managed these initiatives in her building, particularly Early Head Start, for which CDC obtained funding starting in 2014. She was especially passionate about Early Head Start, which for a period of time involved overseeing the program in other Venango County centers.

In view of this individual’s rich history with CDC, her extraordinary impact on our organization for more than 20 years, and the personal and professional legacy she continues to build with our child care and early learning enterprise, I am pleased to present our third Legacy Award to Cranberry CDC Center Director **Michelle Collins**.

Her fellow employees also portray her as a positive role model both **on and off the job, a fabulous co-worker and mentor with whom it is easy to collaborate, an eager learner,” a “staunch advocate for children,” and a driven professional who puts in extra time to ensure that children receive high-quality care and education in her building, which has one of the highest enrollments organization-wide.**

