



STATE ASSOCIATION TO HONOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEADERS AND FAMILIES

For Immediate Release

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TALLAHASSEE, FL – November 1, 2022 – The Florida Head Start Association (FHSA), a nonprofit organization representing Florida's Head Start /Early Head Start Programs will honor eleven state award recipients during their annual awards luncheon in Daytona Beach, FL, on February 9, 2023. These award recipients were selected by a panel review and will go on to compete for regional recognition through the Region IV Head Start Association (RIVHSA).

The 11 winning applicants exemplify high-quality early education, family and community support that has made Head Start/Early Head Start the gold standard. This year's honorees join a list of highly accomplished staff, parents and community partners recognized as contributors to our rich history.

Our honorees are:

Administrator of the Year: Ms. Autumn Tomas, Vice President, Episcopal Children's Services of Florida, Jacksonville

Teacher of the Year: Ms. Azza Tawadros, Hillsborough County Public Schools Head Start Program, Tampa

Staff of the Year: Early Childhood Development/Health: Mental Health Emphasis: Ms. Maria O'Donnell, Senior Director, Comprehensive Services, Episcopal Children's Services, Jacksonville

Support Staff of the Year: Mr. Kenneth Davis, Classroom Support Assistant, Episcopal Children's Services, Jacksonville

Corporate Award: Family Health Source, Deland

Beating the Odds: Erica Fernandez & Dillion Nations Family, Episcopal Children's Services, Jacksonville

Parent of the Year: Ms. Maria Somera - Children First, Sarasota

Father of the Year: Mr. Anthony Ray - Episcopal Children's Services, Jacksonville

Our state nominees for the National Head Start Associations awards are:

Edward Zigler Innovation Award: Miami Dade County Head Start / Early Head Start and Reach Out and Read Florida for their collaborative efforts in connecting critical stakeholders in the community, medical providers, community partners, public health leaders, advocates, and the general community to address the shared mission of building strong family relationships and breaking barriers in accessing quality care.

Aubrey Puckett Memorial Award: Shamella Harmon, a Head Start Alum currently working with Orange County Head Start as a Mental Health and Disabilities Coordinator for her passion for serving Head Start families in her community through education, advocacy, and compassion.

Sargent Shriver Excellence in Community Service Award: Phillip Tavill, President and CEO of Children's First, for his innovative achievement in his community service work for Head Start and Early Head Start through fulfilling Sargent Shriver's vision of providing wrap-around support for young children and their families.

About FHSA

The Florida Head Start Association is a nonprofit organization working on behalf of the 43,000 children and families in Florida. Head Start is an innovative federal-to-local program delivering services from school readiness, comprehensive health, and family support services. The Head Start Program Performance Standards drive programs to strengthen and improve the quality to ensure that all children start school ready to succeed. FHSA has been the voice for Florida's most vulnerable children and families since 1999 and is committed to enhancing and supporting the capability of local Head Start programs in the delivery of high-quality services for our children and families.

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