



## The Florida Head Start Association Announces State Recipients Advancing to Regional Association

For Immediate Release

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**TALLAHASSEE, FL – September 5, 2023** – The Florida Head Start Association (FHSA), a nonprofit organization representing Florida's Head Start/Early Head Start Programs, is pleased to announce their 2023 FHSA Annual Award recipients that will advance for consideration to the Region IV Head Start Association (RIVHSA). This year's honorees join a list of highly accomplished staff, parents, and community partners recognized as contributors to Head Start's rich history.

The State award winners will be recognized during the FHSA Annual Awards Luncheon in The Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village Cape Coral, FL, on October 27, 2023. State awards winners are selected by the Grantee Recipient, evaluated by a panel of peers, and chosen by the FHSA awards committee. The state winners will advance to the Region IV Head Start Association as category finalists.

### **FHSA honorees are as follows:**

**Parent of the Year** – Kyrstle Dominguez, Mid Florida Community Services, Inc.

**Father of the Year** – Darnellion Brown, Orange County Head Start

**Beating the Odds** – Leah Jones, Children First, Inc.

**Administrator of the Year** – Dr. Maite Riestra-Quintero, Miami-Dade Community Action, and Human Services Department

**Teacher of the Year** – Zaida Rojas, Children's Home Society of Florida

**Staff of the Year** – Alisa Thorton, The Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc.

**Support Staff of the Year** – Bryan Ward, Episcopal Children's Services

**Achievement Award** – Jane Shaw, Children First, Inc.

**Corporate Award** – PNC Bank

**Scholarship for Head Start/Early Head Start Staff, Higher Education** – LaShawn'te Lee, Children First

### **FHSA nominees for the National Head Start Association awards are:**

**Edward Zigler Innovation Award** – Brevard Public Schools Head Start for bringing together community partnerships to eradicate oral health diseases among pre-school children. In collaboration with The Florida Department of Health and Space Coast Health Foundation, the Brevard Public Schools Head Start team has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to improving oral health in their community through innovative initiatives and collaborative efforts. This includes their new Onsite School Dental program which

increased the number of screening or exams children received from 53% in 2021-2022 school year to 98% in 2022-2023. In addition, 97% of children, totaling 469 individuals, benefited from Teledentistry exams and 81% of children, or 391 individuals, received fluoride varnish applications, further promoting oral health and preventative measures.

**Sargent Shriver Excellence in Community Service Award** – Jane Mangini and the Minorca Group, for impacting the lives of children and families in an underserved community for the past 22 years. Their contributions at the Chisholm Head Start/Early Head Start program, served by Grantee Mid Florida Community Services, fulfill the promise of Sargent Shriver's vision of providing support for young children and their families.

**Aubrey Puckett Memorial Award** – Kathleen Sullivan, V.P. of Programs and Head Start & Early Head Start Director at Children First, for her dedication to and passion for the Head Start module that helped her family become self-sufficient. Having worked in Head Start for over 36 years, she ensures the program's continuity for future families by advocating for equal education and opportunity in her community, as well for children and families across the nation.

**Vanessa Rich Leadership Award-** Andrea Frazier, Hillsborough County Public Schools Head Start, for her commitment to carrying on Vanessa Rich's legacy of being a strong advocate for Head Start programs while nurturing her early childhood staff, children and families while at the same time creating environments that represent the heart, soul, and mind of Head Start.

FHSA Executive Director Wanda Minick said, "FHSA appreciates being able to give back to those that give so much to so many. We are grateful to all those that work, volunteer and partner with their local Head Start program to help make the difference in the over 40,000 lives of our most at-risk children and families. We wish we could help more as Florida has over 200,000 children under the age of 6 living in poverty." Each year the FHSA partners with Region IV Head Start Association to recognize the work and impact made within the Head Start community to provide a powerful vehicle for inspiring excellence, involving the community, and honoring achievements.

### **About FHSA**

*The Florida Head Start Association is a nonprofit organization working on behalf of the 42,014 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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