

# **Outstanding Early Childhood Professionals for 2008**

## **Dr. Belinda Shook**

Dr. Belinda Shook is currently employed with the Beebe Public Schools as the Superintendent of 3,200 children ages six weeks to eighteen years. She belongs to numerous professional and community affiliations. Some of those affiliations include: Arkansas Reading Council, Legislative Committee for Arkansas Curriculum and Instruction, and the Arkansas Professional Development Task Force to name a few. She has been professionally recognized as the Arkansas Curriculum and Instruction Administrator of the Year (2002-2003), Wilbur Mills Education Cooperative Principal of the Year (1997), Arkansas Association of Elementary School Principals as State President (1999 and 2000), and has had a distinguished service award presented to her as the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (2000). She has been described by Jeannie Majors "as a woman of determination, vitality, compassion and commitment." Dr. Shook began her quest to obtain a new facility to house 4, 5, and 6 year old children when she became Superintendent of Beebe Public Schools in 2005. Shook faced numerous obstacles in her struggle to institute the center, but she succeeded through all those difficulties. Shook's comments that, "her philosophy of early childhood care and education is connected to that of the constructivist theory; we must provide children with a strong background on which to build new knowledge, and it is up to schools and society to provide opportunities."

## **Kay Calvert**

Kay Calvert is currently a professional instructor/trainer with Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia. She has donated her time and effort to many volunteer activities such as the American Red Cross as a hurricane shelter volunteer (2005), a Special Olympics volunteer (2005-Present), and the March of Dimes Walk America as a team captain (2001). She became a teacher to impact lives. Her desire was to step out as an early childhood classroom teacher and to become a teacher at the college level where she would have the opportunity to impact many more lives. Dr. Margo Turner said, "Mrs. Calvert is an excellent Pre K ELLA trainer who uses very creative methods that match the NAEYC standards and guidelines as she models great early childhood teaching." Calvert's vision as explained by her is that kindergarten students need rest and play; they need a more knowledgeable person (their teacher) to provide a developmentally appropriate environment in which their individual needs can be met; they need teacher scaffolding that meets them where they are and carries them forward in their learning; they need to be shown kindness and compassion. A loving atmosphere provided by the teacher would do just that.

### **Kathi Bergman**

Kathi Bergman is the Child Development/Mental Health Manager at BRAD Head Start/Early Head Start/ABC Program in Pocahontas. She is also a Child Development Associate Instructor for the Black River Technical College. She commemorates that “early experiences are critical and if we wait and do not strongly emphasize early childhood education, the college selection parents make may have little impact on life long learning.” It took Kathi 15 years to complete her undergraduate and graduate schooling. She is a role model to others because she encourages others that they can do it just like she has done it. She has a strong place in her heart for children with challenging behaviors. These children need support to be successful in order to develop strong social/emotional skills and she does everything possible to help these families. “Professional growth is a high priority for Kathi,” comments Dr. RoseMary Weaver. She applies all of her working knowledge to any task that is given to her.

### **Meredith O’Hara**

Meredith O'Hara is a Child Care Liaison with the United Methodist Church to the over 100 child care programs operated by United Methodist congregations. This past year, Meredith has been working with 30 child care programs in the Quality Initiatives program. She also organized training for quality, the food program, and non-licensed programs. Meredith has dedicated her time with input to the design of QRS and to the Arkansas Out of School Network. Prior to Meredith beginning her project, almost 14% of Arkansas’ United Methodist Churches were Quality Accredited and now we have 30% more currently attempting the Accreditation process. Diane Clark Vogler tells us that “she is truly a visionary in the world of child care and we cannot begin to measure the passion she has and exhibits for excellence.” Meredith encourages each center to realize the importance of providing the best care possible and will provide valuable updated information that is appropriate and useful.