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*early educators*  
*appreciation*  
*event* **ST. LOUIS**

### **Event to Honor Early Childhood Educators, Recognize 5 Awardees**

**ST. LOUIS (April 18, 2024)** -- The 2024 Early Educators Appreciation Event, which will honor local early childhood educators for their contributions to children and families in Greater St. Louis, will take place at 6:30 p.m., May 5 at the Missouri History Museum.

The dinner and awards ceremony celebration is a collaboration between Books for Newborns, City of St. Louis, LUME Institute, Ready Readers, RISE, SouthSide Early Childhood Center, St. Louis Community College, St. Louis County Library, St. Louis Public Library, The Gateway Early Childhood Alliance, Turn the Page STL, United 4 Children, Urban Sprouts, WEPOWER and Wonderschool. The event is sponsored by PNC Bank, The Gateway Early Childhood Alliance, Youth in Need, STL Pre-K Cooperative, Wonderschool, The Giving Branch- Funded by the employees of Flat Branch Home Loans, and the Meehan Law Firm.

“As an organization that recognizes the value proposition high-quality early childhood education represents for our region’s economy and future workforce, PNC gratefully acknowledges the meaningful contributions of the 2024 Early Educators Appreciation Event honorees,” said Michael Scully, PNC regional president for St. Louis. “This year’s annual celebration is particularly meaningful to all of us at PNC as we commemorate the 20-year anniversary of PNC Grow Up Great®, our signature philanthropic initiative designed to help prepare children from birth through age 5 for success in school and life.”

During the event, five educators will receive awards, each with recognition for one of the following distinctions: 2024 Early Educator of Excellence, 2024 Early Childhood Director Above & Beyond, 2024 Home Visitor of the Year, 2024 Early Literacy Champion and the 2024 Early Childhood Education Champion. The event’s planning team received nominations in support of 46 educators, making for a competitive selection process.

The Early Educators Appreciation Event program is designed to recognize all nominees and provide each award winner the opportunity to share a few words. Additionally, the event’s program will emphasize the importance of early care.

#### **Early Educators Appreciation Event 2024 Award Nominees:**

- Alecia Deal, Village of Moms
- Ashley Warren, Youth in Need Meramec Head Start
- Avonda & Jeremy Brown, Smart Kids Child Development Center
- Candace Gaddie, SouthSide Early Childhood Center
- Christian Neuman, O’Fallon Early Childhood Center
- Christina Stokes, Baden Christian Childcare Center
- Danicia Tate, Dakota’s Children Book Series
- Danyel Sapp, Baden Christian Childcare Center
- DeAiris Montgomery, LifeWise STL Early Childhood Center

- Donesha Taylor, Flance Early Learning Center
- Ellicia Lanier, Urban Sprouts Child Development Center
- Emita Williams, Michelle Obama Early Childhood Center, Riverview Gardens School District
- Jeannie Davis, Parents as Teachers, Ferguson-Florissant School District
- Jessica Black-Gant, Jessie B's Academy
- Jovan Hope, Youth in Need Meramec Head Start
- Judith Johnson, Flance Early Learning Center
- Katy Miller, Parents as Teachers, Mehlville School District
- Keesha Taylor, Flance Early Learning Center
- Keisha Russell, SouthSide Early Childhood Center
- Kellie Kelly, Urban League Head Start/Early Headstart, MLK
- Kent Adams, Ritenour School of Early Childhood Education
- Kevin Lee, Stomp the World
- Kimberly Times, Urban League Head Start/Early Headstart, MLK
- Kyla Riley, Flance Early Learning Center
- LaDonna Pace, Urban Sprouts Child Development Center
- LaDonna Smith, Little Precious Angels Childcare 2
- Lanor Payne, Normandy Early Learning Center
- Latahja Robinson, Little Precious Angels Childcare 2
- Laura Polak, St. Louis County Library
- Lauren Quick, Normandy Early Learning Center
- Lisa Scheer, Baden Christian Childcare Center
- Marian Crane, Cornerstone Center for Early Learning
- Mary Louise Lohier, Youth in Need Meramec Head Start
- Mary Reich, Michelle Obama Early Childhood Center, Riverview Gardens School District
- Nikki Williams, Discovery Children's Center
- Rochelle Bea, Beginning Futures Learning Center
- Sabina Samih, Youth in Need Meramec Head Start
- Samantha Cross, Little Precious Angels Childcare
- Shallen Beckstrom, Baden Christian Childcare Center
- Sharon Smith, Flance Early Learning Center
- Stefanie Ayotte, Flance Early Learning Center
- Taylor Willis, SouthSide Early Childhood Center
- Terrena Herrington, Youth in Need Meramec Head Start
- Tomieka Stephens, Michelle Obama Early Childhood Center, Riverview Gardens School District
- Tonjuana Ethridge, A Child's Heart Learning Center

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