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Texas Rising Star Child Care Providers Honored at 2nd Annual ChildOne Early Childhood Recognition Banquet

Waco, TX – In celebration of May as Child Care Provider Recognition Month, Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas would like to thank the child care providers in the six-county Heart of Texas region who care for and educate young children so that they are prepared to succeed in school. On April 28, more than 200 child care providers, business and community leaders, and elected officials from throughout the Heart of Texas gathered for the 2nd Annual ChildOne Early Childhood Recognition Banquet. ChildOne, an initiative of Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas, focuses on the health and development of young children. “The focus of the ChildOne initiative springs from the understanding that early childhood is a critical period for laying the foundation of future success in school and life,” explains Julie Talbert with Workforce Solutions. “Our annual event recognizes the importance of high quality early care and education and those that provide that early care and education to our children.”

Bosque County Judge Cole Word emceed the recognition banquet and charmed the group with his warmth, sense of humor, and inspiring words about the need to invest in and provide quality early education. “Child Care Providers do amazing work in their support of children, families, communities, and businesses,” said Word. “And investing in early child care is critical to the economic development of our communities and our nation.” In fact, the Bush School of Business found that every \$1 invested in quality early education yields a return of \$3.50. This return is found in greater school success, lower juvenile-justice costs, higher graduation rates, and greater workforce-participation rates.

Susan Gunnewig, Product Development Director with Hatch Early Childhood, Inc., served as the keynote speaker. Her presentation centered on Hatch Early Childhood, Inc.’s IStartSmart Computer System, which is an instructional technology system designed to increase school readiness skills. Gunnewig was part of the team that created the software for the IStartSmart computer system. The highlight of the event was the announcement that Workforce Solutions was able to purchase thirteen of the IStartSmart computers for local Texas Rising Star (TRS) Certified Child Care Providers. “Since it is true that 85% of brain development occurs before a child enters kindergarten, we know how important it is for Child Care Providers to have tools to equip and teach children during those pre-kindergarten years,” explains Talbert. “We were honored to be able to provide 13 TRS Providers with this amazing learning system this year.” Workforce Solutions, with help from Hatch and the Waco Foundation, provided two IStartSmart computers last year.

Other distinguished speakers were Misty Gipson and Joe Nesbitt. Gipson, Director of Aunt Rosie’s Daycare in Mexia, was one of 25 providers honored at the banquet for their participation in the state-wide Texas Rising Star Certification Program for excellence in child care. Having started in the child care industry in the mid-1990’s, Gipson has worked to steadily increase the capacity of the day care center. Aunt Rosie’s Daycare, established by Gipson’s mother-in-law, Rosie, is currently a Four Star facility with the Texas Rising Star Certification Program. “Our Center focuses on the whole child, so we have plans to continue to provide all around care to meet their needs,” said Gipson.

Joe Nesbit, Vice-President of Central National Bank, called on business leaders to invest in quality early education for our youngest children by participating in the new "Adopt a Child Care Center" program. This exciting new program, planned to begin this fall, will match businesses with child care centers. Together the business and child care center will create a plan for how they can work together to improve the care and education of the children. Examples of planned activities include: reading to children each week, painting a classroom, helping with fundraising, contributing to professional development scholarships, and sharing business expertise with the Center Director. "Business leaders know that their employees are critical to success, and a quality early education is the best strategy to building a well-prepared, highly skilled workforce," said Nesbit, "and the 'Adopt a Child Care' program is a great way for those businesses to become proactive in that initiative."

The event was made possible in part by the generous contributions of the ChildOne Sponsors. Champion Sponsors are: Texas 2-1-1, MCC's Child Development Program, Kaplan Early Learning Company, EOAC Head Start/Early Head Start, and Education Service Center Region 12. Visionary Sponsors are: Advanced Foam Insulation of Texas and The Waco Foundation. Builder Sponsors are Tejas Logistics, Diane and Wes Cowan for Experience Works, Inc., Little Cougar, Inc, and Baylor University's Family and Consumer Sciences Department. For more information about this event and to find out what parents, providers, and businesses can do to support early education efforts, visit www.childonetexas.com or contact Julie Talbert at (254) 296-5379.

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas Child Care Services (CCS) operates the region's child care subsidy program and the Texas Rising Star Program locally. CCS pays a portion of child care costs for income-eligible parents who are working or are enrolled in education/training programs. Applications for this program are currently being accepted. For more information, visit www.hotworkforce.com/childcare or call 1-800-772-2269.

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