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Event honors child care professionals

Leaders in the early childhood development field gathered last week at the **Marriott Suites Market Center** to recognize Dallas-area early childhood professionals for their talent and dedication.

Hundreds of professionals attended the event, which is sponsored by **IBM Corp.** and coordinated by **Bright Horizons, ChildCareGroup, Child Care Licensing, Dallas Association for the Education of Young Children, Dallas County Community College District-Eastfield College, Head Start of Greater Dallas, Mi Escuelita Preschool, Parker-Chase Preschool, Kaplan, Lakeshore, Texas Association for Infant Mental Health and Texas A&M University-Commerce.**

"Early childhood professionals have a profound impact on the children they serve, greatly affecting their present and future development," said ChildCareGroup president and CEO **Tori Mannes.** "The work they do is so incredibly important, not just to the children served but to our society's future."

The awards and recipients:

ChildCareGroup's Sonya Bemporad Excellence in Child Care Award: **Maria Caballero**, an infant/toddler lead teacher at ChildCareGroup at **Oak Cliff United Methodist Church.** She has more than 25 years of experience working with young children.

ChildCareGroup's Elaine Krause Award: **Brenda Pearse of the Ratcliff Learning Center** in recognition of her professional development achievements in the field of early childhood education.

ChildCareGroup's Health Services Shining Star Award for an active medical professional dedicated to early childhood development: **Toya Hart**, ChildCareGroup's inclusion specialist.

The Dallas Association for the Education of Young Children's Lifetime Achievement Award: **Wanda Meshack Smith**, CEO of Head Start of Greater Dallas, for her contributions to the field of early childhood education for the last four decades.

The Dallas Association for the Education of Young Children's Margaret Cone Award for impact on children and families: **Maria Angeles Sierra-Hernandez of Mi Escuelita Crossover.**

Alzenia Hunter Teacher of the Year Award: **Maria Caballero** of ChildCareGroup at Oak Cliff United Methodist Church.

Trainers of the Year Award: **Pamela Arnold**, Head Start of Greater Dallas, for providing professional development opportunities to child care providers.

The Advocate of the Year Award: **Denetra Adams, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.**

The Dallas Association for the Education of Young Children's Administrator of the Year Award: **Kim Barnes, Greenhill School.**

The Pat Kennedy Educator of the Year Award: **Barbara Hammack, Texas A&M University-Commerce.**

Joanie Pieper Scholarship Award: **Angel Duncan of Hockaday School.**

The Dallas Association for the Education of Young Children's Education Scholarship Award: **Nicola Montelongo of Ennis ISD.**

ChildCareGroup was founded in 1901 and serves mostly low-income families. It is dedicated to promoting, delivering and expanding the best child care services available outside the home.