

## Early Learning Torch Award Nominations and Community Mental Health Hat's Off for the Month of September

The following staff were nominated within their regions for the **Torch Award** for the month of October. The winners for the Torch Award and the \$ 10.00 dollar gift card are:



**Keri Hinkel**



**Michelle Gaynor**



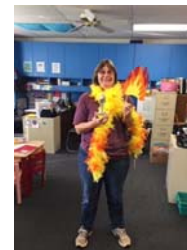
**Michael Prather**



**Alex Bixler**



**Michelle Pendergrass**



**Danielle Gibson**

**Amber Jones:** Such a hard worker, takes her jobs to heart, compassionate and kind to everyone!

**Hannah Althaus:** Hannah has offered to stay longer, come in early, cover for lunch breaks, and help as needed in other Infant/Toddler classrooms to maintain ratios without any hesitation.

**Keri Hinkel:** Keri has offered to help when needed in other Infant/Toddler classrooms to maintain ratios, provide breaks, come in early or stay late as needed.

**Tasha Swafford:** Tasha is always willing to step up and do what is needed. She never thinks twice to help out her fellow team!

**Michael Prather:** Michael spent his Friday (September 14<sup>th</sup>) moving EVERYTHING out of Room 6. In total, we took 3 truck bed loads! It was a lot of heavy lifting, and the program in need of his help was not even the one he works for! He is a fun person with a positive attitude and made the work go by quickly. Upon learning more about his ambitions, he has a bright future ahead of him as a teacher!

**Alex Bixler:** Alex helped me with a referral to Dress for Success, for a parent whose child attends a center that did not have a family advocate at the time. The parent has just started a new job, and it was brought to our attention that the family was currently homeless and was camping until their housing was approved. While Alex was talking to the parent about the referral, she found out that their tents had started to leak due to the heavy rain that day. Alex went that same day and purchased tarps for the family to use over their tents. Not only did she set up a referral with and arrange transportation to the agency, she also stepped out of her job expectations to further help the family. We were also able to help the family with an appointment to Clermont Pediatrics, with the help of our Health Manager, Karen Balon, and arrange transportation. All in all, our team work with this family was TREMENDOUS! For this nomination in particular, I want Alex to be recognized for her INCREDIBLE kind-heartedness! Thankfully the family received help from a friend for hotel accommodations, and they expect to be in housing soon!

**Michelle Gaynor:** Passing out inspirational rocks to each classroom for teachers to pick one a day and read to themselves. This starts our day out with positive feelings!

**Michelle Pendergrass:** Michelle referred a mom who had just started a new job to the Child Focus Employment Program or PEEP program. The mother was looking for help with building her work wardrobe. Michelle connected her to PEEP, and we got her assistance from a resource downtown. As we were arranging transportation, Michelle volunteered to ride along with mom she and made such a positive rapport with the family and is so thoughtful in every interaction. Michelle really went above the mark for her parent in following through and following up, and the mom now has a professional wardrobe so she can continue to find success at her new job!

**Danielle Gibson:** Always going above and beyond her position for the best interest of every child. Also being incredibly kind and helpful to new staff and parents.

## Community Mental Health Hat's Off for the Month of September

The following staff were nominated for Hat's Off: Zachary Sickles, Stephanie Picard, Sarah Ryan and Nikki Moreland

**Zachary Sickles:** A parent reported Zac was very helpful over the phone.

**Stephanie Picard:** A school counselor at Bethel Middle School reported that Stephanie is helpful and "not allowed to leave Bethel."

**Sarah Ryan:** A parent informed reported that Sarah is always returning phone calls and helping her clients feel comfortable.

**Nikki Moreland:** A parent was very appreciative and thanked/complimented Nikki for calling her and intentionally reaching out to her when Nikki started working with her son for the sole purpose of introducing herself, collaborating with her about her son's needs and keeping her informed about how frequently she will be meeting with her son as the mother stated she has not been accustomed to this collaboration. Nikki is new to our agency and works hard to serve the kids/schools she is assigned to. She responds quickly to requests for contact by parents, her school or even myself and this collaborative care is what being a school/community provider is all about. Thank you, Nikki!