

Child care providers are unsung heroes in children's lives

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Good child care is a community resource that supports families, contributes to economic productivity and nurtures children's growth.

ARTICLE OPTIONS



Providing state-licensed or registered child care for children whose parents work or attend school is a challenging and rewarding choice of profession. The choice to work with young children is one of the most important career decisions that one can make. A caregiver is a special person in children's lives as they master skills, develop friendships, grow in independence, and move to new levels of thinking and understanding about themselves and their world.

The hours are long, usually 10 to 12 hours per day. A family child care provider usually works alone, with no other adults. For this reason, the provider assumes many different roles in relation to the children in care and their families: cook, nurse, educator, social worker and special friend. The provider needs to have a variety of skills to manage all aspects of the program (such as bookkeeping, first aid and food preparation skills) as well as meet the developmental needs of the children.

Today's child care professionals are the world's unsung heroes. This profession is one of the most underpaid occupations in the country; yet research shows that early childhood is the most critical developmental period in a child's life.

It takes a special person to work in this field and the contribution these individuals make to the quality of children's and families' lives too frequently goes unnoticed. Provider Appreciation Day offers a unique opportunity to recognize and commend the unselfish dedication, commitment and compassion that child care providers demonstrate every day.

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I think most providers would agree that the challenges are rewarded with knowing that we are impacting children's lives. I was a state-registered family child care provider for 10 years. It is a wonderful feeling when I receive graduation announcements or hear that one of "my" kids is being inducted into the National Honor Society. As I look back on those 10 wonderful years, I was privileged to work for some pretty amazing parents and I always knew I was appreciated.

May 8 is Provider Appreciation Day. Parents, if you have your children enrolled in child care, let providers know how much you value them. For ideas visit: www.providerappreciationday.org.

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