

Athol Group Attends Early Ed Celebration At State House

ATHOL — Early educators and parents from Riverbend Family Child Care Preschool traveled to the State House recently to take part in the Rising Stars of Massachusetts celebration.

This is an annual event sponsored by the Early Education for All Campaign to highlight the positive impact high-quality early education has on young children and families.

Riverbend Family Child Care Preschool is a recipient of the Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Pilot Classroom Quality grant, awarded to early education providers that meet quality requirements established by the state's Department of Early Education and Care.

Laurie Truehart, director of the Riverbend Family Child Care Preschool, was joined by State Rep. Christopher Donelan (D-Orange) at the celebration. Thousands of brightly colored stars, hand-decorated by children from across the state were on display during the ceremony.

“We are thrilled to be a part of the Rising Stars of Massachusetts celebration,” said Truehart. “This is an important reminder

about the impact high-quality early education has on the lives of young children and families. We work to ensure that children enter school ready and eager to learn, and those dividends continue to pay off years later.”

The event opened with a welcome song from the East Boston YMCA's pre-kindergarteners, and included remarks from Massachusetts Education Secretary Paul Reville, chair of the Committee for Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; State Sen. Karen Spilka, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Education; State Rep. Patricia Haddad; and Department of Early Education and Care Board chair Sharon Scott-Chandler.

Advocates Mara Aspinall and Amy O'Leary, of the Early Education for All Campaign, spoke, as did UPK grant recipient, Doreen Dubique, director of Associated Early Care and Education's Castle Square site.

Stressing the Bay State's national role in advancing early education, Reville said, “The greater nation is watching as this work, this star, rises in Massachusetts. The work that we do that reaches thousands of chil-

dren in Massachusetts may ultimately reach millions in the U.S. and worldwide.”

Despite the Commonwealth's challenging economic circumstances, Reville pledged to “preserve the momentum we've built over time.” Early education, he said, is “probably the most powerful, highly leveraged investment we can make in a 21st century educational system.”

“Early educators like those at Riverbend Family Child Care Preschool are on the front lines, making a real difference in the lives of young children and families,” said O'Leary. “Their important work truly deserves to be celebrated. Even in challenging budgetary circumstances, high-quality early education is an important investment for our Commonwealth and our future.”

The Early Education for All Campaign is an initiative of Strategies for Children Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the well-being of children and families through public policy, advocacy, and constituency building efforts. For more information, visit www.earlyeducationforall.org or call 617-330-7380.



EARLY EDUCATORS EVENT — Early educators and parents from Athol with State Rep. Christopher Donelan (D-Orange) at the universal pre-kindergarten celebration in Boston. Left to right — Jeff Bartlett, Tasha Jennings, Jillian Bartlett, Donelan, Thomas Smith, Laurie Truchart and Elizabeth Truchart.

Photo by Christ