

**March 11, 2015 – Middlebury, VT** – To recognize excellence in the teaching of Vermont's young children, the Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children announced the first annual Early Educator of the Year Award. In this first year of the award, the Permanent Fund will be accepting nominations for an outstanding home-based childcare professional who has demonstrated a commitment to quality early childhood education.”

We want to recognize the unsung heroes that work so hard for Vermont's children,” said Rick Davis, president and co-founder of the Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children. “Besides parents, these individuals are a child's first teacher. This award will honor an individual who has truly gone above and beyond to positively impact the lives of children, and has been a valuable resource for families.”

Through this award, the Permanent Fund wants to bring attention to the important work of early educators and emphasize the importance of high quality care and early education. The award will alternate between honoring home-based and center-based programs each year.

This year, the top two finalists will be honored at the October 2015 VAEYC Conference in Killington, VT, where one finalist will be announced as the Early Educator of the Year and will receive \$5,000 and all expenses paid to attend the VAEYC conference as well as one national conference. The second finalist will receive a \$1,000 award, and all expenses paid to attend the VAEYC conference.

To be eligible for this year's award, a home-based childcare professional must have at least four stars in the Vermont STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS). Nominees must also have been providing care for at least three years, and must currently have infants and toddlers enrolled in their program. Individuals may self-nominate or can be nominated by others. The nomination period is now open but will close on May 1, 2015. Nominees will be notified of their nomination and must complete and submit an application to the Permanent Fund by May 31, 2015 to be considered for the award. Nomination forms are available on the [Permanent Fund website](#).

An award selection committee comprised of leaders in early education and child development will review all award applications and choose the two finalists. Committee members are: Laurel Bongiorno (Champlain College); Sherry Carlson (Vermont Community

Preschool Collaborative); Becky Gonyea (Vermont Birth to Three); Scott Johnson (Lamoille Family Center); and, Melissa Riegel-Garrett (Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children).

#### About the Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children

Founded in 2000 by philanthropists Rick Davis and Carl Ferenbach, the Permanent Fund works to improve the quality of Vermont's early care and education system through the support of four statewide initiatives: Let's Grow Kids; Vermont Birth to Three; the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative; and, Mobius, Vermont's Mentoring Partnership. Using a unique, collaborative philanthropic approach, the Permanent Fund works with other funders, non-profits, community leaders and policymakers to improve educational outcomes, build stronger communities and make a lasting difference in the lives of Vermont's children. The Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children is a supporting organization of the Vermont Community Foundation.

For more information, visit [www.permanentfund.org](http://www.permanentfund.org).

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