



**Public Health**  
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## Henderson County Department of Public Health

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Fletcher educator named Henderson County Go NAPSACC Teacher of the Year for supporting health, wellness of children**

**HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. (October 12, 2020)** – Jodie Williams, an early educator at Bell’s School for People Under Six in Fletcher, has been named Henderson County’s 2020 Go NAPSACC Teacher of the Year for her commitment in supporting the health of the county’s youngest residents.

The Go NAPSACC Program of Henderson County provides support to early childhood education centers and family child care homes to improve best practices related to physical activity and nutrition. This year the program implemented a teacher of the year project, designed to highlight an early educator who has gone above and beyond in supporting the health and wellness of young residents.

The Go NAPSACC work group – consisting of experts in the areas of child health, physical activity, nutrition, breastfeeding, gardening and farming and early childhood education – selected Williams for her ability to create a healthy classroom. Her lesson plans create a space for healthy activity as well as celebrating healthy food choices. She helps other teachers do the same.

“I love seeing their personalities come out,” Williams said. “Young children are capable of more than most people give them credit for. It’s been amazing working in the gardens with the children; hands-on learning. After all our hard work, we then have healthy, organic snacks to enjoy. Art projects in my classroom can get messy but are so much fun. It’s a whole sensory experience.”

“We teach the children the foundations of learning,” Williams added. “Not only is it a foundation for later primary school, but we work on the development of their cognitive, physical, social and emotional needs.”

Early childhood education is often under-valued, however. Early childhood educators often make about half of what public school teachers make. According to Williams, she and her co-workers must work a second job to make ends meet. This can lead to burnout and high turnover rates, which is detrimental to the children’s learning.

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“They may form trust with a teacher, and then the teacher leaves,” Williams said. “Then they have to start over with a new teacher.”

Thanks to generous donors like the Mills Rivers Farmers Market and Kaplan Early Learning Company and funding from the United Way and Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas, Williams received: a small cash prize, tokens to the Mills River Farmer’s Market, a gift card to use at Kaplan Early Learning Company, early learning books and puzzles from Smart Start and a Go NAPSACC Teacher of the Year yard sign to be displayed at the school.

Go NAPSACC in Henderson County is available to help child care centers and family child care homes improve health and wellness practices. Those interested in participating in Go NAPSACC or becoming a work group member can email Public Health Educator Sarah McDaniel at [smcdaniel@hendersoncountync.gov](mailto:smcdaniel@hendersoncountync.gov) or call 828-694-6066.

**About Bell’s School for People Under Six:**

The mission of Bell’s School for People Under Six is to provide high quality early education to families of Western North Carolina, putting emphasis on supporting the development of the whole child through a range of early learning opportunities, intentional teaching and teacher/child interactions, and developmentally appropriate practice.

Director Catherine Lieberman said she values physical activity and nutrition because young children’s developing bodies need proper nutrition to grow and physical activity to develop gross motor skills.

“By fostering healthy eating habits and active physical play, children build a strong foundation for development and for learning,” Lieberman said.

Bell’s School was established in 1978 because the owner, Isabel Taylor, felt children not only needed but deserved every opportunity to grow and develop to their full potential. In her own words "This age is too important to be done poorly.”

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