

Jackie Ponschock – Appleton YMCA HERO

It is hard to describe in just three words what the Appleton YMCA HERO Jackie Ponschock has meant to the YMCA and the Early Childhood community. The three words that we felt best described her are:

- **Leader**
- **Inspiration**
- **Compassionate**

Jackie has established herself a Leader for our Y staff, her Child Learning Center staff and all the hundreds of families that she served. Her demonstration of great leadership is to serve. She began her career with the YMCA in August Of 1993, 24 years ago. Hired as a School Age teacher, within three years became a Curriculum Coordinator, another three years later School Age Program Supervisor. In 2000, Appleton Day Care Coordinator and in the fall of 2006 the Child Learning Center Director. She has demonstrated leadership in taking on more responsibility throughout the years. Truly, her test of leadership was stepping in the Child Learning Center Director role. The YMCA was asked to take over management of the large Child Learning Center on the Thrivent campus. This transition from the Appleton Area School District to the YMCA was challenging and Jackie provided direction for the change of schedules, training, benefits and operational procedures. The center's success is a result of Jackie's tireless guidance.

Jackie is also our go-to person to interpret licensing rules and has helped the association team as licensing rules change but was the first to blaze the trail through the Youngstar Quality Rating Program. Providing the association team with her experience, materials and templates.

Here is where our second word is inspiration. Jackie's ability to inspire excellence helped to minimize the adverse effects of management changes on staff and families during the time the Y took on the Center. She inspires staff to expand and refine their teaching skills by providing them educational and leadership opportunities. She also inspires the families of the center by expanding the learning choices and curriculum. She had adapted and changed the center offerings to meet their needs; besides a comprehensive early learning center, new programs were added throughout the years such as: 4K, 4K wraparound, Play and Learn, Summer School Age Care.

Jackie has incredible ownership of the Child Learning center and to make the environment the best it can be; you can find her painting rooms, planting gardens and upgrading playgrounds.

Lastly, the decades of the kids and staff know Jackie as a compassionate leader. She is kindhearted, empathetic and passionate about giving every child the best beginnings to be early learners and an enthusiastic outlook on life. She knows that time they spend at the center has an impact to make this happen. Jackie is compassionate with her staff and encourages them to be lifelong learners; serving as that caring, listening friend we all need in our lives. She is also her staff's best cheerleader helping them chances to grow and thrive. I have been lucky to have been able to work with Jackie. She is someone I personally admire for her positive, creative attitude, rock solid values and ability to give so much of herself to others.

We will miss Jackie when she retires at the end of this year she has been a blessing both personally and professionally to all of us at the Y and to the hundreds of children that she gave her heart.

Please help me recognize my HERO, our HERO - Jackie Ponschock.

