

Paula Polito

*Jefferson First
award recipient*

Jefferson Community Foundation is proud to announce Paula Polito as the 2023 recipient of the "Jefferson First" Philanthropy Award. JCF aimed to recognize an individual who made a significant contribution to Jefferson Parish through their philanthropic giving, community service, actions, talents and dedication.

Paula Polito has worked in child care for over 32 years. She is the owner of Beary Cherry Tree in Metairie and has operated this high-quality early care and education center since 1999. Today, Beary Cherry Tree serves over 200 Jefferson Parish families.

In addition to overseeing everyday operations, Paula currently serves as a contract trainer for Teachstone, the maker of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS). Through implementation of the CLASS tool, Paula understands measures of quality in early care and education, and she ensures teacher-child interactions at Beary Cherry Tree meet – and exceed – these standards. Paula is driven by the outcomes and achievements of children at her center. In addition to quantitative success, Paula has received heartfelt stories from Beary Cherry Tree families about their children's growth and development.

Outside of the classroom, Paula is deeply involved in volunteer advocacy efforts at the state and local level. She serves as Advisory Board Chair for the Louisiana Department of Education, commission member for the Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, advisory council member for Jefferson Ready Start Network, and board member for the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce. She previously served as Education Chair for the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce.

Paula received her Doctorate in Philosophy with a concentration in Urban Studies/Affairs from the University of New Orleans. She prioritizes respect, kindness, and honesty in all that she does. She and her husband teach these values and the importance of a strong work ethic to their three children. Beyond her ambitious work endeavors, Paula enjoys spending time with family and friends, serving the community, exercising, and advocating on behalf of all children.

Congratulations and THANK YOU, Paula, for your commitment and dedication to Jefferson Parish!

