

## Our Storybook Heroes **Who Paved The Way**



Their unwavering commitment, creativity, and compassion have shaped our journey in profound ways. Whether through bold advocacy, tireless service, or transformative collaboration, these heroes have left an indelible mark on our mission—and on the lives we touch every day. We celebrate their legacy and the inspiration they continue to spark in all of us.

Our staff members—past and present—are the hands that lift, the voices that guide, and the hearts that nurture. They show up every day with compassion and purpose, creating brighter futures for children and families across our community. These honorees have not only carried our mission forward, they’ve elevated it. They are the reason our story continues to unfold with hope, impact, and possibility.

### **(Former) STAFF HONOREES**

- Danette Bosh Alexander
- Leslie Deem (accepting this recognition in memory of Leslie are Inta Lewis & Lynette Oaks Fulmer)
- Cindy Gansmiller
- Geri Grove
- Scott Hasselman

No meaningful work happens alone— and our story would not be complete without the incredible individuals and organizations who walk beside us as community partners. We honor those who have opened their doors, shared their resources, and stood shoulder to shoulder with us in service of children and families. These partners are collaborators, connectors, and champions. Each brings unique strengths to the table and helps us reach farther, dream bigger, and serve better.

Whether through shared programs, outreach efforts, advocacy, or innovation, our community partners have helped us turn vision into action. They are the bridges between needs and solutions; between hope and opportunity.

## Community Partners Honorees

- Akron YMCA
- Canton City School District
- Dr. Cecilia Schweitzer of Psychological & Educational Solutions, LLC
- Dr. Peter Leahy (accepting this recognition in memory of Peter are his wife, Mary Leahy, & daughter, Elizabeth Coldren)
- Gail Montana
- Happy Campers
- JRC
- Stark County District Library
- Summit Education Initiative

Every great mission is powered by people who give—not because they have to, but because they believe in something bigger than themselves. We celebrate extraordinary individuals who make our work possible: our volunteers and our donors.

Donors are the lifeblood of the Early Childhood Resource Center. Their generosity fuels our programs, sustains our outreach, and ensures that every child and family we serve has the support they need to thrive. Alongside our dedicated volunteers, they are the quiet force behind the scenes—funding our mission, lending helping hands at events, offering warm smiles in our halls, and sharing words of encouragement that lift others up.

They show up with open hearts and willing hands, asking only how they can help—and in doing so, they make a lasting difference. Their impact can’t be measured in hours or dollars alone. It’s felt in the joy of a child, the relief of a parent, and the strength of a community that knows it is seen, valued, and supported.

## Volunteers & Donors

- Bradley Belden
- Robert & Kathy Belden
- Sherry Kauffman

Advocates are the ones who speak up when it’s hard, who stand firm when it matters most, and who carry the torch of change through every challenge. They are the bridge between need and action, between silence and progress. Whether in boardrooms, classrooms, community halls, or quiet conversations, their impact echoes far beyond the moment.

At the Early Childhood Resource Center, our advocates were the pioneers who dreamed of a resource center to serve the community, who helped shape policy, elevate awareness, and ensure that every child, family and provider has a chance to thrive. Their passion fuels our mission, and their persistence moves it forward.

## Advocates

- Joni Close
- Vicki Conley
- Sister Judith Ann Karam

Behind every milestone, every program, and every life touched by the Early Childhood Resource Center, there is a generous spirit—someone who believed in the power of possibility and chose to invest in it. Tonight, we honor some of our many longtime funders—the visionaries who have been with us from our earliest chapters, fueling our mission with their trust, their resources, and their unwavering belief in the importance of early childhood education. Your support has helped us grow from a single chapter into a story of lasting impact, reaching thousands of children, families, and educators across our community. You are more than contributors—you are changemakers. Because of you, classrooms are brighter, families are stronger, and futures are filled with hope.

## Funders

- The George H. Deuble Foundation
- The GAR Foundation
- PNC
- The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton
- United Way of Greater Stark County