

For Immediate Release

Outstanding Educator Mary Sue Hale Named ELCA Early Childhood Director of the Year

GOODYEAR, ARIZONA—June 13, 2018—Mary Sue Hale, Director of Cross of Hope Lutheran PreSchool in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has been selected as the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association's 2018 Early Childhood Director of the Year. ELEA is the national membership association of private secondary, elementary and early childhood schools throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the largest Lutheran church body in the United States. "Director Hale was nominated by a colleague, and selected by her fellow administrators through a national search process conducted by the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association", said Gayle Denny, Executive Director of ELEA.

Graduating with distinction with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of New Mexico and holding a variety of professional early childhood licenses and designations, Ms. Hale has served as Director of Cross of Hope Lutheran PreSchool since 2002. Her early childhood teaching dates back to 1986.

Criteria for selection of the ELCA Early Childhood Director of the Year program require that the honorees are active administrators of schools where programs are designed to meet the physical, academic and social needs of all children served and where there are firmly established community ties with parents and local business organizations.

Ms. Hale has a long list of accomplishments at Cross of Hope, but one area in which she seems to shine the most is in developing a sense of community. She is seen as a leader who is highly supportive of her teachers and is always willing to go the extra mile if someone, staff, child or parent, has a need. Pastor R. Adam Berndt of Cross of Hope Lutheran says, "While working closely with her in leadership, she has inspired me with her commitment and love for the children, her teachers and the mission of Christian Early Childhood Education." One of her classroom teachers says, "She exemplifies many Christ-like attributes, along with great leadership and managerial abilities and strong communication skills."

Mary Sue Hale will be honored at the January 31 – February 2, 2019 IGNITE ELEA National Administrator & Pastor Conference being held at the Gaylord Texan Resort in Grapevine, Texas, along with the recipients of the 2018 ELCA Elementary Principal of the Year Award, the 2018 Distinguished Pastor of the Year Award, and ELEA's Donald A. Vetter Educational Service Award.

Since 1988, the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association has served as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's professional educational association and now represents 1400+ early childhood programs throughout the nation, along with about 100 elementary and secondary schools. ELEA is also an active member of CAPE – the Council for American Private Education.

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