

Provider Appreciation Day

HOW IT STARTED

May 8th 2009 is [National Provider Appreciation Day](#). This day of recognition celebrated annually on the Friday before Mother's Day was spearheaded by a group of volunteers in New Jersey in 1996. These individuals saw the need for a day of appreciation and recognition for childcare providers and initiated a pilot program within their local network that was met with great enthusiasm by parents and providers. Now in it's 11th year, this day has been supported by groups in all 50 states as well Canada, Europe and Asia. Supporters have initiated proclamations that have been signed by many local governments and governors, gained media coverage, and planned events where business and community leaders as well as parents have honored child care providers on this important day.

Ode to Day Care

Little children come to me for hugs and books and such
I care for all their simple needs and I also fix them lunch.
I pick up toys, I mop their spills and often dry their tears.
I change their diapers, settle fights, and kiss away their tears
I tie their shoes, I button coats and push them on the swing.
I really love these kids you see but there is just one more thing
Call me Mom or Aunt or Florence, and those names just might fit.
But please don't call me SITTER because I never get to SIT!
~author unknown

WHO DO WE APPRECIATE?

Child care workers and teachers are indeed much more than babysitters. Most have recieved specific training or education and work in programs that are specifically designed to promote the optimal growth, education and development of young children. Each day we intrust these people with our most precious resource; our future. Yet sadly, childcare remains one of the most under paid and under recognized professions.

[The Center for the Childcare Workforce](#) gives us a profile of the average childcare provider and the challenges they face. The daycare workforce is 98% female and one-third of those are women of color. The average center-based child care teacher nationwide earns roughly \$7.00 an hour, despite above-average levels of education. Roughly one-third of teachers are paid the minimum wage. Even those at the highest end of the pay scale, who are likely to have a B.A. degree and several years of experience, earn on average barely \$10.00 an hour. Family child care providers, who care for small groups of children in their own homes, earn even lower wages: providers who are subject to licensing or other forms of regulation earn less than \$9,000 per year after expenses, and non-regulated providers earn less than \$6,000. Despite a high exposure to illness on the job, fewer than one-third of child care workers have health insurance. Even fewer have a pension plan. Many are expected to work without breaks, and often for extra hours without pay.

HOW TO SAY THANKS

Showing your appreciation to a child care provider need not be an expensive or elaborate gesture. You are sure to warm a caregiver's day simply by taking a moment to remind them how much they mean to you and your child. A simple card or gift made by the child would surely be welcome. If you purchase a gift for a provider, you may wish to keep it simple. Gifts that support their work or help them "pamper" themselves, are always popular.

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