



EveryChild California's Circle of Excellence
April 2019
Jennifer Stewart
Program Specialist
Neighborhood House Association

Congratulations to Jennifer Stewart for being inducted into EveryChild California's Circle of Excellence for the month of April. Please take a moment to read Jennifer's story about her journey in the world of Early Childhood Education in her own words.

I was born on a cold wintery day in New Jersey (December 24th). At a very early age I developed Asthma which forced my family to move to Colorado to be closer to a medical facility that specialized in my illness. Although I was challenged throughout my youth, with the help of my family and doctors I was able to control my illness. We then moved to Arizona where I spent my formative years. While in high school I had the opportunity to dip my toe in early childhood development classes. This began my passion in the industry which led me to pursue it further in college. I attended the University of Arizona (Go Wildcats!), where I started to put my passion into practice. I would go on to receive my Bachelors of Science in Family Consumer Resources, Family Studies, and Human Development. Once I left college I decided San Diego was where my heart lied and moved here to start the next phase of my life. My first job in the industry was as a substitute teacher with Neighborhood House Association. I knew Early Childhood Development was what I wanted to do, and subbing allowed me to get my foot in the door. I knew I was going to have to work my way through the ranks. After subbing for a couple of months I was offered a full time teaching position. However, my teaching life was short lived, as I was promoted to become a Site Manager overseeing 12 employees ranging from teaching staff to social service support to home visitors. I was responsible for this site for 2 years. I was young, barely 22 when I got that job. Over the next 10 years I was given the chance to work with FCC providers, social service support staff, and a multi-disciplinary team. In 2010 after exclusively working with the Head Start program, I switched over to become the CDE Eligibility Specialist. In 2011 while working full time and raising a daughter I finished my Masters of Public Administration with a Specialization in Finance. Throughout the last nine years I've moved up to manage the Eligibility Department, and became the CDE contracts specialist. Although I don't provide direct service to the children any longer, I know the importance of every aspect of what we do to influence and develop the minds of the children we work with.

Life is made easier by my great 18-year-old daughter, who has recently become a licensed esthetician and is pursuing her Associates Degree at San Diego City College, my amazing mother who moved to San Diego and helped me raised my daughter and ensure my progress continued seamlessly, and the wonderful man I recently married who supports me in all my endeavors.

1. What has been most rewarding about your career in early education so far? Seeing parents flourish with the support we provide and the opportunities they have to gain leadership skills in the program.

2. If you could give advice to someone who is new in the administrative role, what would it be?

To ask as many questions as you can and find another administrator that you can lean on. Learn everyone's role especially the fiscal side of contracts. We all tend to rely heavily on our knowledge of the ECE field and not quite understand where, how and when the funding plays into things.

3. What is your proudest accomplishment in your career?

Seeing a mother, whose child was 2 when she was in my classroom then running into her 15 years later and finding out she went on to pursue an Associate's Degree in ECE and get a teaching credential and became a Kindergarten teacher. Know that our program provided her an opportunity to get into college and move into a life-long career has been great.

Thank you, Jennifer , for your support and efforts on behalf of the children of California and EveryChild California. If you would like to nominate an EveryChild California member for the Circle of Excellence, please email us at info@everychildca.org