

What's Happening at SECA

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Coming Soon: New Spanish Pages Being Added to Dimensions of Early Childhood

Beginning with the Spring/Summer 2010 issue of Dimensions of Early Childhood, each issue will feature one article with it's Put These Ideas Into Practice page in both English and Spanish.

We hope that by offering these practical tips in a bilingual format, we will be better able to provide support to the South's ever-growing community of Hispanic early childhood professionals and parents.



2010 Conference Highlights

The 2010 Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas in January was a great success. With the help of our affiliate the Arkansas Early Childhood Association, we welcomed 900 early childhood professionals to Little Rock for a weekend of professional development, fellowship, and fun. For those of you who weren't able to attend, here are just some of the highlights from the conference.



Presenter Lillian Hubler proves that the SECA Conference is *anything* but boring!



2010 Friend of Children

This year SECA recognized Steven Gross as our 2010 SECA Friend of Children. Steve is the Founder and Executive Director of Project Joy, a non-profit organization that uses play to strengthen and heal children whose lives have been deeply impacted by trauma. Steven has devoted his career to the service of our most vulnerable children, and we were honored to hear him speak during a featured presentation on Saturday morning.



2010 President's Award

The *SECA President's Award* was awarded to Congressman Dan Boren of Oklahoma. Congressman Boren has fought to improve rural schools by co-authoring legislation that infused much needed dollars into Oklahoma's schools without raising taxes.

As a strong advocate for rural communities, Dan's top priorities are job creation, improving education and rural health care, and making Oklahoma's small business environment more conducive to growth.

2010 Outstanding Member

Phil Acord of Tennessee was named the 2010 SECA Outstanding Member. Phil has long been a leader in the state of Tennessee as a champion for young children. He is also a SECA Past-President.



Other awardees included:

Helen Harley Award

(to a first-time conference attendee)

Mary Jamsek, Texas
Amy Wolfe, West Virginia
Robert Beckham, Virginia

Marian B. Hamilton Award

(to support local affiliate projects)

Jackson Association on Children Under Six
Early Childhood Association of Oklahoma
South Carolina Early Childhood Association

Rich B. Scofield Award

Allie Logan, Alabama

Student Grant

(to support student groups to attend the conference)

University of Arkansas
Community College at Morrilton

Getting to Know the 2010 Presidential Candidates



Beverly Peden of Mississippi

Beverly recently retired as Executive Director of Crossgates Methodist Children's Center in Brandon, Mississippi, a position that she held from 1993 to 2009. She has a B.S. in Elementary Education from Belhaven University. In 2004, she achieved the Director's Credential Designation from the National Institute of Child Care Management and completed

the Montessori Training from the Association for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. She currently is an early childhood consultant, including working with the Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute to assess programs with the Early Childhood Quality Rating Scale.

Beverly has been a member of the Mississippi Early Childhood Association since 1988, serving as President in 2001, and was recognized with MECA's highest award, the MECA Award. She currently serves as the Mississippi Representative on the SECA Board of Directors.

She served on Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour's Early Childhood Committee from 2007 to 2009 and currently serves on the Mississippi Department of Health Advisory Council. In 2004 she was named National Director of the Year by the National Association of Child Care Professionals and was recognized by the Mississippi Business Journal as one of the 50 Leading Business Women of Mississippi. In 2007, she received the Bettye Quinn Education Award from Belhaven University.



Nancy Cheshire of West Virginia

Nancy is Early Childhood Professor Emerita at Pierpont Community and Technical College in West Virginia. She has a Master of Education Degree with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education from West Virginia Wesleyan College and completed additional graduate work at West Virginia University.

As a Professor of Early Childhood at Pierpont, she served as the Early Childhood Program Coordinator, Supervisor of Early Childhood Practicum Students, Director of the Fairmont State Laboratory Preschool, and Advisor to the Associate of Applied Science Degree majors and Early Childhood Occupational Development majors. In 2007, she received the Fairmont State Paul Edwards Outstanding Teacher Award.

Prior to her role as a professor, she served as the Executive Director of Lasting Impressions Child Development Center, Inc., which is located at the FBI Complex in Clarksburg, West Virginia, and received a letter of commendation and merit award from the United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1996.

Nancy has been a Governing Board member of the West Virginia Association for Young Children since 1995. She served as the West Virginia representative on the SECA Board of Directors from 1998 to 2005 and was named SECA's Outstanding Member in 2009. She currently serves as co-chair of the SECA Editorial Committee.

Our Vision

(Excerpted from candidates' written responses to questions submitted by the SECA Nominating Committee)

What are the major challenges facing SECA during the next four years?

Peden: "I would say because of the struggling economy and the effect it has had on every individual, the budget is the major concern for SECA in the next four years. Since SECA depends on the annual conference as the major income source for the organization, I believe we must be sure we choose locations that are desirable and easily accessible to possible attendees. I'm referring to locations with airports that are major hubs such as Nashville and Atlanta as well as a lot of choices of things to do. With many public and private schools unable to pay for travel, teachers have to be willing and able to come at their own expense. We need to consider that when choosing locations. We have noticed that the major attendees lately have been those in higher education. While that is good, we don't want to lose our appeal to those who actually teach young children both in the public and private sectors.

Therefore, we also need to work hard to provide dynamic speakers that address their wants and needs and motivate them to want to go to the next level in their teaching. In my opinion, and in talking with teachers who attended SECA in the past, we need to provide more practitioners as speakers (or those who have been in the classroom in the past) who will give attendees ideas that can be used in the classroom. I am not saying the conference isn't already strong, just needing more practitioners as presenters.

Cheshire: We live in an ever-changing world. We do not know what national, regional or state emergencies, legislation or policies will impact the early childhood profession during the next four years. It will be the responsibility of the SECA President-Elect to assist, support and encourage our members during this time.

The current economic conditions will impact SECA membership numbers, conference attendance and state affiliate operations. The implementation of universal pre-K programs in southern states can bring positive or negative outcomes, but we can take steps to promote best practices for our children and early childhood professionals. The issues relating to assessment of young children continues to be a challenge to our profession. Professionalism within the early childhood community must be strengthened if we are to be recognized for the important role we play in the lives of children and families. Increases in the numbers of families living in poverty, as well as increased numbers of homeless and hungry children will continue to be challenges for our society and our profession. At the same time, the epidemic of childhood obesity must continue to be addressed. The SECA leadership must meet these and other challenges of the next 4 years with hope, confidence and commitment.

The President-Elect will have an opportunity to work with the SECA states, to learn about state initiatives and challenges, and to determine strategies that will allow our association to serve our membership. I believe my many years of experience as an active SECA member, member of the Board of Directors and as an advocate for early childhood in West Virginia will

allow me to effectively serve our association. I believe our challenges can be turned into opportunities to strengthen SECA as we serve the children, families and early childhood professionals in the south.

What issue(s) would you like to address if elected President?

Peden: I think SECA needs to address legal issues that affect child care centers and public schools. Locally a parent is suing the school district because her son was moved to the alternative school when he threw something at the bus driver. She thought the discipline was extreme. A local child care center's director was arrested when a school-aged child (who was a known bully) enrolled at the center was hit by another child in self-defense. Even though the accuser didn't show up for court and the case was thrown out, the director had to have a lawyer and go through the stress of this false accusation that was written in the papers. This is not an isolated case. SECA can help by providing speakers who deal with this every day such as Ron McGuckin, a lawyer who only handles cases like this and is a wonderful speaker. SECA can also provide more speakers on discipline.

SECA can also provide parent education training that teachers and schools can use to educate parents. Our director's organization members have noted that in the last five years, one year old children are more like creepers in their behaviors, twos are more like ones, etc. Therefore, our center worked hard to educate parents early on these things to help them help their child develop self help and self regulation skills.

Cheshire: As SECA President I will continue positive practices which have been successful in the past. I will continue strengthening the relationship between SECA and state affiliates, as well as with NAEYC and other professional organizations. I believe a marketing plan can be implemented to provide name recognition of SECA at both the state and local levels within our affiliate states. To improve quality of care and education, professionalism must be supported. I would like to encourage family and child care providers, and others caring for young children, to see themselves as "teachers" who have an important impact on children's lives. I will encourage the building of future early childhood leaders and will support college and university early childhood groups and

other leadership initiatives.

What are SECA's strengths?

Peden: SECA's leadership is one of its major strengths. The staff and board include leaders who are effective, passionate and are the movers and shakers in our field in the South.

The SECA Conference has always been a strength of the organization.

The last major strength I will mention is **Dimensions** is a wonderful publication and in recent years has become even more effective through the teachers pages.

Cheshire: SECA has a strong history of welcoming and including ALL individuals working to improve the lives of children and families in our southern states. I am proud to be a member of SECA! Each of the thirteen member states is represented on the SECA Board of Directors. This provides a strong linkage from our association to our individual state affiliates and the inclusion of two members-at-large representatives strengthens our diversity and representation. SECA is large enough to be able to make a positive difference in our profession, yet small enough to listen to the membership and form strong connections with both individuals and affiliates. SECA has many positive attributes on which the incoming president-elect can build a successful future.

A great strength of SECA is the annual conference. The association has taken positive steps to welcome college students and child care workers with special conference events. The SECA Director's Seminars have strengthened and encouraged program administrators. These actions have helped improve quality of early childhood care and education. At SECA Conferences and events,

there is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere where lasting friendships are formed, professional networking is facilitated and early childhood professionals develop leadership skills. SECA is a living example of "southern hospitality".

What are SECA's weaknesses?

Peden: I know that SECA has addressed membership retention, but I'd like to see SECA be more aggressive to contact former members. In our local organization, we also have this problem so it needs to be addressed locally as well as from SECA.

I'd like to see incentives to reach more preschool and child care workers to attend SECA and become involved in leadership.

Cheshire: I believe that lack of name rec-

ognition is a weakness for our association. If elected, I want to plan and implement a positive marketing strategy. I would like to seek corporate sponsorships and grants to initiate projects so SECA will be known as THE premier early childhood association of the south. To be most effective, our name must be recognized at both state and local levels within our affiliate states. SECA is comprised of thirteen member states, which may be seen as a small number, therefore, a weakness. When compared to NAEYC, we are, indeed, small in size. However, our size can also be seen as a strength. Member states share similar problems and concerns and when united, we can make a powerful statement.

How will your leadership help SECA to address the weaknesses and how will you build on the current strengths of the organization?

Peden: I am a proven leader in Mississippi as well as through working as a Liaison of the National Association of Child Care Professionals for 14 years. I am a "people person" always on the lookout for those who are on the fringes and often am able to draw them in. I have been able to develop leaders as a director. For example, I trained seven of my employees to be dynamic presenters at conferences. Some have become active on the board at our local affiliate. My leadership style is one of collaboration which is so important in being able to get everyone involved. I would work on our customer service skills so that conference attendees feel included and glad to be there. I would work with the staff and board to encourage states to contact members whose membership is due.

Cheshire: Margaret Mead said, "Never underestimate the power of a small group of thoughtfully committed people to change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has." SECA began as a small group of dedicated and committed individuals. SECA is built on a firm foundation of welcoming all individuals and working with them to improve the well-being of children, families and early childhood professionals in the south. Our affiliates share common problems and concerns. By working together we can build a stronger association, known throughout the south as the leader of our profession. I would like the opportunity to serve as the SECA President and to lead our organization in the coming years.

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The Voice for Southern Children

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2010 SECA Board of Directors

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Go to the SECA website for e-mail addresses for the Board.

Conference Snapshots



◀ SECA Board Member Joyce P. Jones (VA) and 2010 Helen Harley Award Winner Robert Beckham (VA) enjoy a laugh while at the Public Policy Luncheon



◀ Keynoter Donald Davis captivates the crowd with his artful storytelling.



◀ Steven Gross receives the 2010 Friend of Children Award from SECA President Dr. Janie Humphries.

Phil Acord (TN) Accepts the 2010 Outstanding Member award. Presenting the award to him are SECA President Dr. Janie Humphries, SECA Board Member Lisa-Maddox Vinson (TN), and past SECA Board Members Kathy Ennis & Debbie Ferguson of Tennessee. ▼

