

2010 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO CHILDREN AWARD

Jessie Rasmussen - Omaha and Steve Wilson - Hooper



Jessie Rasmussen has spent a lifetime making the world a better place for people in general, and for children most specifically.

As a state senator she advanced early childhood and quality child care legislation. As director of the Department of Health & Human Services in Nebraska & in Iowa, Jessie provided visionary and effective leadership in bringing all of the services for children and families together in a way that could better meet children's needs.

Jessie served as the policy director at the Nebraska Children & Families Foundation. While at the foundation, Jessie was successful in working with others in the early childhood field, private foundations, & the state senators to pass legislation and a constitutional amendment that established the Early Childhood Education Endowment fund.

Jessie now serves as the Vice President of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and the early childhood task force co-chair for Building Bright Futures. Jessie's amazing leadership style now advances state and national early childhood policy and practice efforts. Jessie stays focused on making a positive difference for young children.

Jessie is known for helping others see what changes are needed, and then letting a collaborative team define and design how it would work best in the given situation. She embodies empowerment, action and relationships in moving things forward. Jessie's commitment to the early years is embedded in a strong belief that the first five years of life are the foundation for a child's success throughout their lifetime.

"The world is a better place because Jessie Rasmussen decided to make young children the passion of her work."



Steve Wilson is currently Superintendent at Logan View Public School. He earned his higher education at Nebraska colleges: Doane College, University of Nebraska at Lincoln, & University of Nebraska at Kearney.

He was Elementary Principal at Centura Public Schools for several years. He has been an active leader in true collaboration to develop the highest level of services for preschool children. While at Centura, he began working closely with the Nebraska Department of Education exploring innovative funding strategies to help schools start Pre-K programs. Centura Public Schools became the first district in Nebraska to tap the new funding streams to start a Pre-K program at Centura Elementary. The new Centura PreK program originally worked with Central Nebraska Community Services Head Start & later with Head Start Child and Family Development Program Inc. The program became recognized for providing a broad array of early learning & social support for children and families following the Head Start Performance Standards, as well as Rule 11.

Steve has served on numerous committees including President of the Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals, Secretary for the Nebraska Association for the Supervision of Curriculum Development, Federal Relations Coordinator for the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, Early Childhood Policy Study Leadership Team, and Nebraska AEYC President.

In 2001, he received the National Distinguished Principal Award.

"Steve Wilson always believed it was beneficial to maximize blended resources and offer comprehensive services that Head Start requires to ALL of his school district Pre-K children in order to provide positive child outcomes."