

Flora Gee is without question one of the most dedicated childcare professionals I have ever met. Greenbelt Children's Center (GCC), owned and directed by Flora, is a model for high-quality childcare. The center has achieved NAEYC national accreditation in addition to having passed licensing inspections 100% for many years in a row.

Flora's commitment to quality is evident in many ways. After long and busy days, she teaches at the community college. She closes the center for two days each year for in-service training so that the staff can improve their skills without having to use personal time off. The focus on quality can also be demonstrated through her diligence in finding and applying for grants and special opportunities for the children. Recently, through a grant Flora obtained, the children attended two culturally diverse performances at a local theater. GCC is also a participant in the pilot program, Maryland Model for School Readiness, which involves Flora and several staff members in partnership with public schools.

GCC not only cares for children, but also helps parents. There are free parenting seminars, parent-teacher networking events, working parent recognition activities, and monthly newsletters that share ideas about how to help our children, safety issues, and local resources available to parents and children. Flora has arranged a partnership with the Bowie Therapeutic Nursery so that parents at GCC can receive free consultations and advice from early childhood psychologists and social workers – at a parent's request, not just a teacher's.

Perhaps the one thing that sets Flora apart is her advocacy activities. She has been a member of the Maryland Committee for Children Public Policy and Compensation Subcommittees for several years. She attends monthly meetings, gives presentations all over the state, and testifies before the Maryland Legislature on bills affecting our children. Her work contributed to getting lead screening added to the mandatory health inventory for pre-school children. This past year, Flora testified on more than 6 different occasions, and she gave paid time off to her staff to testify on issues that were important to them.

Even greater than that, she inspired busy parents to take time off and testify. From Flora's shining example, I got involved and have participated in Maryland Committee for Children meetings, Worthy Wage Day rally, and testified before the Maryland Legislature.

Flora is tireless in her efforts – to support, encourage, and provide the best benefits and work environment for her staff; to provide high-quality, affordable childcare; and to partner with parents in caring for our children. Flora recently said to me, "If I won the lottery, I would work without a salary, and establish trust/retirement funds for my staff, because the children need us." Childcare professionals get little financial compensation, so it is important that they get the recognition and respect that they deserve. While I have only been able to touch on a few of Flora's accomplishments, I hope it has been enough to demonstrate that she is a very deserving and worthy candidate of this honor. I recommend her without hesitation, and I hope that you will do the same.

Sincerely,

Christi Buker