



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**MINNESOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS RECOGNIZE ADVOCACY GROUP
The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) to present the
Friend of the Year Award to Elders for Infants on August 4, 2022**

St Paul, Minn., August 4, 2022 – The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education announced the Friend of the Year Award winner today. The award is presented to acknowledge MNAFEE's appreciation of contributions to children, parents and families and/or the publicly funded programs that serve them.

The Elders for Infants group was chosen as winner of the Friend of the Year Award for 2022. Members of this group are: Glenace Edwall, Dave Ellis, Sandy Heidemann, Jane Kretzmann, Jim Nicholie, Glen Palm, Mary Kay Stranik, and Katie Williams. Elders for Infants is a group of retired professionals who have worked and advocated for families and young children throughout their careers. In retirement they have come together to form a highly regarded and influential group advocating for legislation and programming supportive of families with infants. In this context, *infants* is defined as ages prenatal to age 3.

The group began as an effort to look at the lack of funding for our youngest children and their families. They have worked with MN legislators including Representatives Dave Pinto and Lisa Demuth and St. Thomas University administrators and staff to organize quarterly policy forums over the last 6 years.

They have given time, wisdom, encouragement, and a tenacious drive to lobby for policies and legislation supportive of ECFE. They have helped guide the discussion for this type of support, joining meetings with MNAFEE's legislative committee, lending their voices to conversations with local legislators, coaching members of MNAFEE through the testifying process, and tirelessly advocating for parent education. In the 2022 legislative session they joined with the MNAFEE Advocacy Committee to lobby for increased support in staffing at the Minnesota Department of Education.

Their work has made such an impact on professionals in the field that there were two individuals who made nominations of the group for the Friend of MNAFEE Award in 2022. The dedication and commitment of Elders for Infants helps ensure that the quality of the programming and services we provide to families of our youngest children continues for years to come. Families in Minnesota will experience a lasting impact as a result of the Elders for Infants efforts.

About the Friend of the Year Award: This award is presented to an individual, group, or organization who has made significant contributions to the fields of parent education, Early Childhood Family Education, and/or early childhood programming in public schools in Minnesota and thereby has been a champion for young children, parents and/or families, and/or the publicly funded programs that serve them. The individual, group or organization does not provide consistent direct service within parent education, Early Childhood Family Education, or early childhood programming in public schools in Minnesota.

Nominees for the MNAFEE Friend of the Year Award must:

- reside or have resided in Minnesota or do business in Minnesota
- have made a statewide impact on the lives of young children and/or families, and/or the publicly funded programs that serve them
- have improved the quality of life for young children, parents and/or families, and/or the publicly funded programs that serve them.

The Elders for Infants group was recognized at the MNAEFE August 4 Board Meeting.