

NIST Child Care Center 35th Anniversary Celebration Remarks

Walter Copan, NIST Director

August 24, 2018

- Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, good afternoon and thank you for joining us today. And thanks, Josh Pomeroy, for your kind introduction and for serving as the President of the Board of the NIST Child Care Association.
- I've been looking forward to this event. Our children are our future. And they are the joy at the center of every parent's life.
- That's why the kind of high quality, nurturing environment we have here at the NIST Child Care Center is so important.
- I want to welcome four of the six founders of the Center who are here with us today. Lorna Sniegowski, Eleanor Bateman, Jennie Covahey, and Gerda Sherwood. Founders, please stand. (*Lead applause*). Thanks to each of you for your leadership.**

** Note: Founders Janice Knapp-Cordes and Willard Roberts were unable to attend.

- And I want to thank Tracey Rex, the Director of the Center, and the team of volunteers who organized this celebration including Laura Espinal, Gladys Arrisueño, June Lau, Caron Heigel, and Denise Levis.
- Since 1983, the Center has offered peace of mind to parents, and top-quality care and instruction to their children.
- I'm certain that this place and its dedicated staff have played an important role in attracting young talent and retaining outstanding NIST employees and associates.
- And as an added bonus, knowing that your child is well cared for and nearby, helps improve productivity by lowering the daily stress today's parents and even grandparents cope with every day.
- With well-trained teachers and this marvelous state-of-the-art building, the children can play, expand their minds, and learn to overcome their challenges so that they can grow mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- At NIST we are committed to excellence. The NIST Childcare Center shows us every day that they are living that core value.

- I am especially impressed because this center is a non-profit that supports itself and has an active oversight board run by volunteer parents.
- The NIST Child Care Center began as a grassroots effort among the Standards Committee for Women, which included male colleagues.
- It took lots of hard work over many years to make this place a reality.
- I'll leave it to other speakers today to tell the full creation story for the center. The key takeaway for me, however, is that people with initiative saw that such a childcare center was needed, and they dove right in.
- They volunteered, they worked hard, they collaborated and overcame many obstacles to make this celebration today possible. If you helped get the Center started in those early years and are here with us today, thank you.
- As most of you know, the first location was at the Bowman House, located off Quince Orchard Rd. on what some here call the "back 40." It was a residential property that came with the NIST campus in the 1960s.

- It was a small building that had been used for many years as a kind residential lab for testing the performance of everything from appliances to weatherproofing to lawn mowers.
- The first childcare center class had only 21 students and 5 staff members. But they persisted.
- And from those uncertain and humble beginnings, the NIST Child Care Center now serves 121 children, has 30 staff members, and includes a state certified kindergarten.
- Over the years, more than 2,000 children have been served by the Center, each of whom stayed in the program for multiple years.
- I'm sure all the parents on the waiting list think the number of children served is still too small.
- Slots are coveted. Some parents both here at NIST and from other federal agencies get on the waiting list the moment twinkles appear in their children's eyes.
- The Center has also recently begun a summer camp complete with STEM classes. These classes get children thinking about and interested in science early, opening a

world of discovery to their young, curious minds.

- Hopefully, this will result in more than a few of the students developing a passion for science and help to inspire them to follow in their parents' footsteps.
- And it gives some of our staff the opportunity to develop professionally as science communicators and teachers, vital skills for creating the next generation of scientists and engineers.
- I've seen some of the fun activities they get to do.
- So please know that I admire and appreciate everyone who works here at the NIST Childcare Center or volunteers as a parent to help the Center.
- Your work has great impact beyond the children you help care for, beyond their parents, and beyond NIST. You are literally helping to chart everyone's future by nurturing these young minds.
- Happy 35 years. I know that as long as NIST is around, we will need this place. As Buzz Lightyear would say, "To infinity and beyond!" Thank you!

- Now, I'm honored to introduce the next speaker, Laura Espinal, a scientist from NIST who has two kids at this Center and is currently serving as a member of the Board of Directors. Laura --