



## NOVEMBER 2012 UPDATE FOR DISTRICT



### CONTACTS FOR PARAPROFESSIONAL ISSUES

#### **Congratulations to Connecticut's Paraprofessional of the Year!**

#### **Tenisha Baker**

Congratulations to Connecticut's first Paraprofessional of the Year, Tenisha Baker, who is currently an instructional paraprofessional at Sunset Ridge Elementary Academy for Arts and World Language in East Hartford, Conn. She works with students in Grades 4 through 6 who often need support in language arts and math. In his letter of recommendation, her principal, Emil Kopcha, calls Tenisha, a "valuable member of our school community. Her dedication, pride and commitment are assets that have led her to become the East Hartford Paraprofessional of the Year." Krystle Sheehan, a special education teacher who works with Ms. Baker adds that "Tenisha will not deny help to any student, identified as having a disability or not. Without question she goes the extra mile to help students with projects, organization, assistance in all subject areas, as well as offer emotional support and a listening ear."

Among her contributions, Tenisha developed a Buddy/Buddee Leader Program at her school. In this program, sixth-grade students work with fourth-graders that need extra instruction. Ms. Baker wanted to ensure that students who have some behavioral challenges are chosen to be the leaders and paired with fourth-graders with behavioral challenges. This gives them the self confidence they need to be role models to the younger students. Ms. Baker mentors the peer leaders, who have risen to the occasion and have improved their behavior because their self-esteem has increased.

There were many factors that influenced Ms. Baker to become a paraprofessional including her love for teaching students who have difficulties learning and her appreciation for education. The primary reason she decided to become a paraprofessional is because of her son Daniel. Daniel was a special education student requiring speech from age two and he didn't start talking until age five, which required speech and language until sixth-grade and language services through eighth-grade. Some suggested to Ms. Baker that Daniel wouldn't do well in the school because it was geared toward grooming students to attend Ivy League Schools. At the end of that school year, Daniel had B's and earned all of the most improved awards in every subject. Daniel now attends college. "I decided to enter this field to help all the Daniels' of East Hartford. I know that there are many kids that just need extra support like Danny. I know that there are many kids that are not as fortunate as Daniel to have supportive family members. It doesn't mean that they can't thrive. They are striving to learn and to prove that they can do better."

As Paraprofessional of the Year, Ms. Baker will serve on the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council and will represent paraprofessionals in forums and conferences that highlight the effective utilization and evaluation of paraprofessionals across the state.

Ms. Baker and all district paraprofessionals of the year will be recognized during SERC's Paraprofessionals as Partners Conference on Wednesday, November 14, 2012, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cromwell. Please click here for more information regarding the conference: <http://ctserc.org/conferences/2012/paras%20flyer%202012.pdf>.



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The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council established the Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year Program to recognize the important role of the paraprofessional in supporting student achievement. The program honors one paraprofessional who has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication in his/her job, thereby earning them the respect and admiration of students, teachers, administrators, coworkers, and parents. For more information regarding the program, please visit the CSDE Paraprofessional Information and Resources page: [www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali](http://www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali). Nomination information for the 2014 Paraprofessional of the Year will be sent to districts in February 2013.

The CSDE and the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council would like to thank all districts who submitted nominations for this award. We would also like to congratulate all of the district nominees for paraprofessionals of the year for their accomplishments and thank them for their dedication to the children of Connecticut.

### *National Resource Center for Paraeducators 31<sup>st</sup> National Conference For Paraeducators and Related Service Providers*

The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCPP) will hold its 31<sup>st</sup> National Conference for Paraeducators & Related Service Providers, April 18-20, 2013, at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center, Salt Lake City, Utah. For over two decades, this conference has responded to the professional development needs of these varied individuals and provided the opportunity to bring together a broad range of audiences. Session topics will address:

- Research initiatives focusing on paraeducator effectiveness, training and supervision, on-on-one use of paraeducators, or other pertinent topics;
- Hands on training designed to strengthen on-the-job performance of paraeducators;
- State & local initiatives to set standards for: Paraeducator roles in various staffing arrangements and programs, skills and knowledge required by Paraeducators working in different levels of paraeducator positions, training and professional development opportunities for paraeducators;
- Incentives for retaining a skilled paraeducators workforce; and
- Standards and professional development models for preparing supervisors to work effectively with paraeducators and direct service providers.

Go to the NRCPP Web site at [www.nrcppara.org](http://www.nrcppara.org) for:

The Online Call for Papers is posted at [www.nrcppara.org](http://www.nrcppara.org).

Deadline for submission of proposals is Friday, October 26, 2012.

Online Conference Registration: Register today for special early bird pricing!

Hotel and Travel Information-Please note: Hotel reservation deadline is March 16, 2013. Reservations must be made prior to this deadline in order to receive the special NRCPP room rate of \$122.00.

Contacts: Marilyn Likins 801-272-1091, ext. 221 or Connie Beck at 435-797-7272.

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