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Elizabeth Porras (left), Human Resources assistant, serves as Metro's liaison with the Gateway Child Development Center. She and Esme Ortiz, the center's director, praised General Services' help in earning the prestigious NAEYC accreditation. *Photo by Ned Racine*



Gateway Child Development Center Earns Prestigious Accreditation

By Ned Racine, Editor

(January 22, 2008) The Gateway Child Development Center (GCDC) is one of the nation's first child development centers to earn accreditation based on tougher criteria from a leading organization of early childhood professionals.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) granted the five-year accreditation on December 31, 2007. Although the GCDC had received other NAEYC accreditation, this was the first under the tougher standards.

"A center that is NAEYC-accredited stands above and beyond just the basic standards for a center," said Esme Ortiz, the GCDC director. "It actually means that people from the outside came to check the quality of the center, the interaction between teachers and the education the teachers have."

Ortiz described the NAEYC standards as much stricter than state standards. She explained that during the assessor's unannounced visit, she examined 10 areas of child development, amounting to hundreds of questions.

These include physical facilities, classroom setups, parent participation, outdoor play space and outdoor activities, as well as the safety and supervision of the children. "One of the biggest areas to them is child assessment: Are we keeping proper records of the way the children are

developing in our classrooms?” Ortiz added.

“Knowing that only about five percent of childcare centers nationwide are accredited, it is a big highlight when you do find a center that is accredited through NAEYC,” Ortiz said. The NAEYC has been issuing its accreditation since 1985.

Elizabeth Porras, Human Resources assistant, serves as Metro’s liaison with the GCDC, which is run by a private company under contract to Metro. Porras makes her own unannounced inspections of the GCDC several times a month.

“When she sees me walking through with my little clipboard, [Esme] knows what I’m here for,” Porras said. “I go through every aspect, every single room of this facility.”

Perhaps that is why Porras remembers the day the assessor visited the GCDC as no different from any other day. “It was just consistency and uniformity,” Porras said. “This is a smooth operation.”

Both Ortiz and Porras single out General Services for its commitment to maintaining the GCDC facilities.

“General Services is actually very involved year-round on a daily basis,” Porras said. “There are times when we have to seek them out and say, ‘We need this right now.’ Prior to Esme knowing that she had a visit—she just didn’t know when—General Services really, really pulled through for us with a last-minute request.”

Porras singles out Jose Aguilar, General Services supervisor; John Flores, general clerk II; Phyllis Meng, General Services supervisor; Bob Skarseth, facilities maintenance supervisor, and Brian Soto, DEO, General Services.

“I’m very proud of Esme and her team,” Porras said.

“To me it’s a really nice accomplishment,” Esme said, noting how hard her staff worked during the past year preparing for the unannounced visit. For herself, her reaction was “I did good.”