



Summa Associates
Solutions for Work-Life Effectiveness

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Media contact:

Janet Cooper/ Terri Macdonald
(480) 377-9366

Professional Home-Based Child Care Provider in Mesa Receives Elite National Recognition

*Wendy Epp Serves Children in “Close to Home[®]” Program
& Intel Preferred Provider Child Care Network*

TEMPE, Ariz – (Dec. 13, 2004) One Valley mother is doing her part to raise the bar of professionalism in one of our most important, and most undervalued, occupations – that of in-home child care provider. **Wendy Epp**, a professional home-based child care provider in Mesa with the pioneering program **Close to Home[®]**, has been accredited through the **National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)**, making her only the second in Maricopa County to achieve this recognition for excellence.

Epp is part of the **Close to Home Program** and **Intel Preferred Provider Child Care Network**, which are administered by Tempe-based work-life consultants **Summa Associates**. Epp received extensive mentoring, training and assistance from the collaborative program, which allowed her to obtain the accreditation. In addition, fees for the accreditation process were funded through a grant from ASU.

Epp, who is licensed by the Arizona Department of Health Services, has been a child care provider for 2-1/2 years, usually caring for five children in addition to two of her own. Driven by a desire to excel in her role as caregiver, Epp underwent rigorous training for the certification process during the past year, supported by a grant from Summa Associates, in concert with the Arizona Self-Study Project. Epp’s own family and child care families have been extremely supportive of her efforts, from allowing her the time necessary to complete training to minor home remodeling to create the ideal environment for Epp’s charges.

A knowledgeable, well-trained caregiver can be a parent’s best ally and resource. NAFCC’s and Close to Home’s training processes are designed to help providers set and reach quality improvement goals and help parents and policy-makers identify high-quality family child care. Accreditation requires that providers offer care and education to children in a home, spending at least 80% of the time with the children. Providers must have a high school diploma or GED plus at least 90 hours of relevant training, and must have 18 months experience in family child care regulated at the highest level available in the state. During the process, which takes from 9 months to 3 years to complete, caregivers undergo self-study, training, observation and evaluation.

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“I have definitely learned something after taking all the hours of training in ECE (Early Childhood Education),” says Epp. “I have really enjoyed learning more about children’s behavior and the reasons why they might act out or have separation anxiety. I’ve also learned a great deal about new techniques for discipline and creative new ideas to keep the children busy during the day.”

Epp has words of advice for her peers: “On a business level, be as professional and organized as possible. Your day care clients will take you and your job more seriously if they know you are a professional child care provider and will take wonderful care of their children. On a personal level, make sure you take time out for yourself. Working 50 to 60 hours per week can be difficult. Be sure to take time for yourself so you don’t get burned out.”

Epp’s role as a home-based child care provider is a critical part of the success of the Close to Home program, which was developed by Summa Associates with a coalition of local businesses in answer to the growing need to provide qualified child care options for working parents. As the program has grown over its first few years, key business partners have included: Intel, Bashas’, Honeywell, Salt River Project, Arizona State University and AT&T.

About the Close to Home® Program

Close to Home is a collaborative program developed and supported by local businesses to create a network of in-home child care tailored to meet the needs of their employees. The innovative program has been recognized by the Department of Labor as an outstanding service to the community in the way it aligns the needs of both business and employees to provide the highest quality child care for parents who must work, some for extended hours, and who want their children close by. The Close to Home home-based network also provides care for infants, which many child care centers do not accept.

“The Close to Home program is a creative example of how Arizona companies are recognizing the bottom-line importance of addressing the needs of their parent workforce,” says Karen Woodford, President of Summa Associates. “Work-life initiatives are a major factor in employee retention and productivity. Considering the cost of personnel replacement, absenteeism and low morale, companies are finding that work-life programs like Close to Home are an investment that pays off,” adds Woodford. Research has shown that employees who experience work-family conflict are three times more likely to think about quitting their jobs as those who do not.

For more information about the Close to Home program or becoming a professional home-based child care provider, contact Summa Associates at 480-921-2266 or visit www.summa-assoc.com.

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