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GAME CHANGER

Children's Paradise Founder
Julie Lowen

By Kristi Hawthorne

Julie Lowen is a game changer, a visionary who implemented a new approach to early education. The Founder of Children's Paradise, Lowen's innovative Learning Centers stand apart from any other. Her facilities are welcoming, spacious and state-of-the-art, which sets the stage for exceptional learning. Children's Paradise is a Tier 5 on the QCC (Quality Counts California Quality Rating and Improvement System) for quality early care and education in California.



While her method to childcare and early learning is inspirational, Lowen said she herself is inspired by the children she sees, who along with their families have overcome a variety of obstacles. "I am inspired by families who sacrifice to adopt children, offer their own homes to the homeless and take on the role of the giver and helpers within our world without expecting praise, recognition, an award nor some type of a benevolent government to shoulder the responsibility. I am inspired by women who give their children life despite unbelievable odds stacked against them. I am inspired by fathers who show up and make their children know how much they are loved. Everything good, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good-report inspires me."

The Children's Paradise Inc. model does not segregate children or families based upon their income, rather they accept funding from more than 15 different funding sources. This method of funding for early care and education allows all children to attend their programs. They also provide "Smarty Patch Scholarships" which allow children without access to any funding to also attend their programs equally with



their peers. Last year alone Children's Paradise offered more than \$600,000 in Smarty Patch Scholarships to meet the needs of children in North San Diego County.

Lowen's long range vision for childcare is that Early Care and Education Centers would become "the hubs within the community where families find all of the supports they need to raise strong and resilient children. These centers should be places where stay-at-home parents connect to play and find resources. These hubs should be the places working families rely upon as they seek exceptional care and education for their children and a place where routine medical care and advice can be easily accessed on the way to or from work."

She also envisions Learning Centers that would house WIC, developmental assessments, food-bank supports, Cal-Fresh, medical-insurance access along with other supports so that families can access them more efficiently and conveniently. Lowen stated: "The Early Care and Education Center must be the place which connects the community to the seamless supports each family may need but are unable to access because of time, income or mobility limitations."

When asked how she defines success, Lowen replied: "A success is simply a failure who refuses to quit! I am not sure where I first heard this but I can tell you that in my life this is certainly true. Every human being has the capacity for success and the capacity for failure. In fact we all succeed and fail daily. Being willing to get up, fight back, ask questions, learn, grow and do it over-and-over again is the key to lifelong success. At Children's Paradise we define success as the thousands of smiles we create and sustain every day."