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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Lil' Red Hen Nursery and Pre-School



Lifelong Learning Begins Here



DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR
Excellence in
Early Childhood

Interview by Lin Nordmeyer

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Anne Atkinson, Lil’ Red Hen, owner/administrator

Lil’ Red Hen Nursery and Pre-School in Delmar, Del., has the special distinction of serving both Maryland and Delaware. Located on the border of these states, this center has created one big community through its work in providing quality care to generations of these neighboring areas.

This community is what motivates Anne Atkinson, owner/administrator, to continue to pursue quality improvements for the more than 125 young children - infants to school age - in her program.



87 year-old early child care educator veteran Dorothy Ann Wainwright represents the generations that give back to Lil' Red Hen. Before her retirement on July 1st, "Mom-Mom Ann" as she's fondly called, served 29 years with the program. She is pictured on the right receiving a proclamation of service from Rep. Tim Dukes.

Lil' Red Hen utilized funding from the DIEEC "Let's Go Outside" outdoor learning initiative to build an outdoor classroom. Additionally, Anne is a "Let's Go Outside" ambassador and is excited to spread the word to other early childhood education programs about the benefits of outdoor learning.

"We have parents who came to Lil' Red Hen as children," said Anne. "Now their kids are here because of the quality education. They keep coming back, and they give back."

"The Delmar community helped support us during COVID. Families provided lunches and dinners and looked for every opportunity to accommodate our staff."

And in return, Anne and her staff are steadfast in delivering an educational experience rooted in a philosophy that focuses on creating learners versus performers.

"Our educational philosophy is for our children to be excited about the world and willing to try new things - a learner," Anne explains. "Versus a performer who is afraid to fail."

To help cultivate this philosophy, Lil' Red Hen utilized funding from the DIEEC "Let's Go Outside" outdoor learning initiative to build an outdoor classroom. Additionally, Anne is a "Let's Go Outside" ambassador and is excited to spread the word to other early childhood education programs about the benefits of outdoor learning.

Anne's involvement with DIEEC doesn't end there. She participates in Communities of Practice (CoPs). CoPs are regularly scheduled meetings facilitated by a DIEEC technical assistant (TA) where early childhood professionals can support and share ideas with others in the field.

"Our CoP most definitely helps support me," said Anne. "It has been a sounding board where directors can share their successes and failures and give advice."

Support has also come from Anne's relationship with her DIEEC TA, Holly Griest. According to Anne, Holly "really understands" their goals and provides timely support with emails and counsel to help them make quality improvements.

"Our role has been to be a source of support and resources as the program makes efforts in improving their quality of care," said Holly.

"They expanded their learning with additional support and coaching."



"They have developed a relationship and continue to consistently collaborate with me in working with the QRIS/CQI protocol to keep their momentum of wanting to do more and do better, constantly moving forward."

"Finally, they are a staple in the Delmar community, and they take pride in that! Their efforts to provide the best care in the area are endless, and they are always striving to do better."