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# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Creating a Legacy in Early Childhood Education

## Q & A



with Michelle Williams of  
**Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center**



**What comes to mind when you think of the word “legacy?”**

“Impact and making a positive difference comes to mind when I think of the word legacy.”

**Can you give an example of the impact of your work as it relates to legacy?**

“Having a positive influence on generations of families who enroll their children in Hilltop programs because of our relationships. An example is we host an annual Girl Boss Summit to empower girls and to let them know that, not only is it alright for them to be in leadership positions/roles, but they can also succeed in them.”



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Image provided by  
Michelle Williams

**Provide background on how you chose early childhood as your profession. Were there other family members in the field who influenced your work?**

“Early childhood chose me. Hilltop was my first and is the only full-time job that I’ve had. I am in my twenty-first year! I came here after completing a year of AmeriCorps service with Public Allies Delaware. Prior to that I was a student at the University of Delaware. I did my practicum/internship with Northern Delaware Early Head Start (where I first met Heidi Beck), now known as New Directions Early Head Start (NDEHS). I started at Hilltop as the lone family service worker for both NDEHS and ECAP and worked my way up to now being the executive director of the organization. Being able to build relationships and make connections with the children and families, seeing them succeed/achieve goals, as well as being able to relate to many of their lived experiences, has kept me in the field.”

“There were no family members in the field, but I brought my sister in to volunteer in ECAP. She quickly became a substitute, an assistant teacher and now a lead teacher (19 years later).”

**What keeps you motivated to continue serving young children?**

“The joy of seeing children and families meet their goals keeps me motivated. To be able to listen and be the support person that is needed also brings me joy. The gratitude that is shown by the families when they receive food baskets and grocery store gift cards for the holidays. The smiles that are on the children’s faces when we have special events or when they receive their gifts for the holidays melts my heart. Attending high school graduations of former participants is truly a great feeling. All of these and many more experiences let me know that my efforts are well worth some of the challenges that are endured in doing this work.”

**When your current children are adults, what would you like them to remember about their experience in your care?**

“The loving and family-like atmosphere that Hilltop provides.”

“The friendships and relationships that were established.”

“Teachers who were impactful.”

“I want them to be able to have “remember when” stories that they can share and have good laughs about. Since most children come in as infants and stay until they are in middle school, I also want them to remember some of the mistakes they make so that they are knowledgeable of the consequences that may come.”



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Image provided by Michelle Williams

**If you could go back in time and give your younger, professional self a piece of advice related to leaving your mark/legacy on the field of early childhood, what would that be?**

“Do it because you love it! Be genuine! Be consistent (even when it’s hard)! Give it all you got! Impacting lives is bigger than yourself! Be the change maker that you always hear about!”



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