



# **The 2012 Georgia Parent Leadership Award Winners**

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**February 18, 2012**



**The 2012 Georgia Parent Leadership Awards**  
***Many Talents. One Purpose. Student Success.***



**Congratulatory Message  
from Georgia's State School Superintendent**

It is a privilege and an honor to have the opportunity to announce the six inaugural winners of Georgia's Parent Leadership Award. This is truly a special day not only for our parent winners, but for the Georgia Department of Education and our collaborative partner, Georgia PTA, as the dream of recognizing our state's remarkable parents with an annual statewide award becomes a reality.

Parents, schools, and communities working together create meaningful partnerships that ultimately lead to significant gains in student achievement and success. The parents honored today have spent countless hours strengthening our public schools and enhancing the lives of all children in their school community by serving as parent-teachers, advocates, organizers, learners, decision-makers, motivators, and liaisons. It is amazing to see the results when parents take on these roles and are empowered with the tools needed to effectively work alongside our educators to ensure that students have what they really need: educators in the home and in the classroom.

While this award only recognizes six of Georgia's finest parent leaders, I want to say a big thank you to all of the parents and families across our state who lead by example, taking on the full-time job of being engaged in their children's education. It is my hope that this award will inspire all parents to use their unique talents, no matter how big or small, to pave the way for *making education work for all Georgians*.

Congratulations to our Parent Leadership Award Winners!

Best regards,

John D. Barge, Ed.D

**Georgia State  
Board of Education**

Barbara Hampton, *Chair*

Helen Odom Rice, *Vice - Chair*

Linda M. Zechmann

Elizabeth J. Ragsdale

Daniel Israel

Kenneth Mason

Mike Royal

Wanda Barrs

Larry E. Winter

Brian K. Burdette

Dr. J. Grant Lewis

Allen C. Rice

Mary Sue Murray





## The 2012 Georgia Parent Leadership Awards

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**The Georgia Parent Leadership Awards are annual awards that recognize parents for their outstanding leadership in creating a foundation of support for student achievement and success.**

### About the Georgia Parent Leadership Awards

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Georgia Parent Teacher Association (GA PTA) created the award to recognize parents across Georgia who utilize their various skills and talents to strengthen our schools and positively impact the lives of our children. The award also hopes to inspire all parents to use their unique talents, no matter how big or small, to **lead** the way in building positive outcomes for all children.

The award recognizes the many skills and talents of Georgia's parents, particularly as they exhibit their leadership through any or all of the National PTA Standards for Family - School Partnerships found on the following page. Parent Leadership Award winners are chosen not only based on their demonstrated talents, but also on how their work has benefitted the entire school community on behalf of all children.

Parent leaders are nominated each November during Georgia's Parent Engagement Month by Georgia's public school personnel. Any caregiver who assumes the responsibility for nurturing and caring for a child's entire well-being consisting of educational, emotional, spiritual, and physical health can be considered. Six Parent Leadership Awards are given each year. Two parents, one representing a Title I school and one representing a Non-Title I school are selected as winners in each of these three categories: Elementary School, Middle School, and High School. This year, since there were no nominations received in the Non-Title I Middle School category, two Non-Title I Elementary School Parent Leadership Awards were granted.

Winners of the Georgia Parent Leadership Award are afforded opportunities throughout the year to share their many recognized talents by promoting and assisting with parent engagement activities at the state level.



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The essence of parent leadership is that the work is **SUSTAINABLE**.

It will continue to impact the school, its children, and their families once the initial parent leader is no longer at the school leading the way.

Winners of the award are parents or caregivers who have contributed to the school community in a way that is bigger and beyond themselves.

## **What is Parent Leadership?**

### **The National Standards for Family - School Partnerships**



National PTA. (2008). National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. Washington DC: Author





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## **The Many Skills and Talents of Our Parents**

A parent exhibits leadership through any or all of the following National Standards for Family-School Partnerships:

- 1. WELCOMING ALL FAMILIES** - Welcomes all families into the school, recruits others to be a part of the life of the school, participates in school events and activities, and connects to what students are learning and doing in class.

**Examples:** Develops personal relationships, creates a welcoming environment, provides opportunities for all to volunteer, removes economic obstacles to school participation, respects all families and sees the value in what they can offer...

- 2. COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY** - Engages in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning and other events in the school community.

**Examples:** Facilitates connections among school families, provides information on current issues, uses multiple communication paths to reach all...

- 3. SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS** - Collaborates to support student learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and takes advantage of regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

**Examples:** Develops families' abilities to strengthen learning at home, helps families to become engaged in the classroom, uses school and student data to mobilize parent action and student support, shares school progress...

- 4. SPEAKING UP FOR EVERY CHILD** - Empowers others to be advocates for their own and other children to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

**Examples:** Helps others understand the school district in addition to parental rights and responsibilities, builds families' capacities to be effective advocates...

- 5. SHARING POWER** - Participates in decision-making that affects children and families and informs, influences, and creates policies, practices, and programs within the school or educational community.

**Examples:** Inspires other parents to be leaders, has a voice at the table in school and community decisions that affect children...

- 6. COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY** - Collaborates with community members to connect students, families and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

**Examples:** Partners with community groups to strengthen student support, organizes support from community members, links to resources...



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### Tyler Barr

#### Mirror Lake Elementary School, Douglas County Schools

**Mr. Barr is deserving of this award because of his outstanding leadership in creating an atmosphere that encourages student success and involves families, extended families, and the community. He is an advocate for public education and proves that we can make our own success with hard work, involvement, and a desire to achieve. He has many skills and talents, but the greatest is his dedication to continuous [student] improvement.**

**CATHY SWANGER, PRINCIPAL  
MIRROR LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

When Tyler Barr's son started Kindergarten at Mirror Lake Elementary School, his mission from that point on was clear: get parents in the school door by making them feel welcomed in the educational setting. He has been moving full speed ahead ever since. Knowing he had to understand the inner workings of the school to bring about effective change, he spent countless hours shadowing his child's principal through a collaborative program between the Chamber of Commerce and the Douglas County School System. He built relationships with administrators, teachers, and students to better understand the challenges and successes that each faces.

Through Tyler's efforts, he has led other parents by example. His desire to have more male role models for students in the school led to programs that inspired many more fathers to be present and active in school events. It is now common to see fathers volunteering, eating lunch with their children, mentoring, and participating in other involvement opportunities. He has also ensured that the school is welcoming to all families no matter their ethnicity or culture, as the school community represents over 19 countries. He developed a welcome sign representative of all the different languages and holds cultural programming events throughout the year so that all feel that they are a valuable part of the school community and their children's education. His work does not stop there, as he finds time to serve on the SACS Steering Committee, chair the most recent SPLOST committee and serve on various community boards.

As Tyler completes his first year as PTA President, this is just the beginning of many more great things to come for the students and their families in Douglas County Schools!



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**Juli Hall**

**Sara Harp Minter Elementary School, Fayette County Schools**

It takes a special person to give freely and unselfishly for the good of all children and the school community. She [Juli] has proven herself, time and time again, to be a leader and motivator willing to do "whatever it takes" to ensure that the best learning opportunities are available to all.

*SUSAN GITTINS, TEACHER  
SARA HARP MINTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL*

On any given day if you are looking for Juli Hall, you do not need to look any further than Sara Harp Minter Elementary School. Known for her creative and innovative approach to tasks, whether she is attending county board meetings, teacher leadership meetings, or helping out at the school she is voicing possible solutions to issues that affect all students. And, her solutions are held in high regard by school staff and parents alike.



Juli strives to ensure success for all students by serving on the School Council and providing excellent insight into school improvement that relates to 21st century skills. Based on this work, she was the catalyst in the development of a parent/community survey on 21st century skills that was distributed throughout the school community. The results have been invaluable to school staff as they work to ensure student success in all academic and developmental areas.

Her work does not end there though, Juli also volunteers in the front office once a week welcoming all visitors in an efficient and friendly manner. She serves as a room parent for one of her children's classrooms and gives of her time by tutoring two students twice a week in reading and math through the school's tutoring program. She has also built extensive ties with the community through two fundraising activities that generated over \$5,000, with all funds going directly to science instructional support and at-risk children.

As Juli continues to bring about change in collaboration with school leadership, rest assured that Sara Harp Minter's students will do just fine in the 21st century!



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## **Susan Dodson**

### **Timothy Road Elementary School, Clarke County Schools**



There is no doubt that Susan Dodson understands that the student, family, school partnership exists to further student achievement, as exemplified by the way she helps all families understand how they can participate in the life of their child's education and their school. As PTA Co-President and room mom, she meets regularly with the school principal to discuss ways they can continue to engage families by planning family and student activities that link to learning. Also, wanting all students to have the same real world experiences, she often brings in community members and organizations to provide various opportunities. To foster stronger relationships between families and to help them feel connected to the school, she also coordinates various fundraising efforts with community building activities that allow all families learn and have fun together.

Susan also serves as an advocate and communicator to parents about school happenings and is seen as someone who is trusted within the school community. She empowers other parents to be leaders, as well, and equips them with the needed resources along the way. This year, when a parent was reluctant to be PTA President by herself, Susan offered to be Co-President for a year until the other parent felt comfortable enough to lead on her own.

Susan is not only an ambassador for Timothy Road Elementary but also the Clarke County School District. In 2008, she started Food 2 Kids, which is a collaborative effort between the Junior League of Athens and the Northeast Georgia Food Bank. Food 2 Kids bridges the student hunger gap by providing weekly food bags to students who are in jeopardy of not having enough to eat over the weekend. The bags are delivered every Friday and are filled with six meals and additional snacks. Currently, over 3,200 food bags are delivered each school year. Through her ongoing work she has influenced many policies, practices, and programs ensuring that obstacles to student achievement are removed so that all students have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Thanks to Susan, Timothy Road and Clarke County students are well fed and ready to learn with the support of many family, school, and community members along the way!

### **Title I School**

**Susan's energy and enthusiasm is nothing less than amazing. I have often asked her, "how do you do it all?" And, she does it with a calmness that makes it all look easy when you know she has worked tirelessly.**

**She inspires those around her to do more and help more.**

**KATHIE ROBINSON,  
PTA MEMBER & VOLUNTEER  
TIMOTHY ROAD  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



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## **Elizabeth Caldwell**

### **Jasper County Middle School, Jasper County Schools**

**Title I School**

Jasper County Parent Involvement Coordinators did not have to think twice about nominating Elizabeth "Liz" Caldwell for a Georgia Parent Leadership Award. She was an instant choice, as many throughout Jasper County Middle School and the school district recognize her as the liaison between the school and the community. In fact, the Jasper County Superintendent and Jasper County Middle School Principal, both still relatively new in their tenures, credit Liz for being an invaluable resource to them as they try to bridge the gap between the school system and their local neighborhoods.

As PTO President and member of the Superintendent's Community/Parent Advisory Committee, she has proven to be successful in recruiting and encouraging other parents to become more engaged in their students' learning and school activities. She creates a sense of urgency among families and community members on behalf of the students, and as a result, is a force that inspires others to get involved in the life of the school community. She looks out for all students' interests and meets regularly with the school principal to discuss them. Liz does not only do this herself, but she continuously encourages and trains other parents to speak with teachers and administrators regarding issues about which they feel strongly. As a result, the faculty and parents understand that by working together they help the students and contribute to the school's continuous improvement process.

Liz also spends countless hours mentoring an at-risk student as part of the county's mentor program, volunteers with the local 4-H Chapter, provides regular job shadowing opportunities for students in the field of environmental and natural resources, as well as has been extremely successful in securing funding for projects that benefit all students throughout the school.

With Liz's continued service and passion for student success, the impact on Jasper County Schools and its students is guaranteed to be nothing but great!

**Liz Caldwell embodies the motto of Japser County Schools, "OUR Children, OUR Community, OUR Responsibility." As a community member, Liz clearly places the needs of our children and youth first and she truly understands that it is OUR collective responsibility to make this community better; and she does all of this work unselfishly.**

**MIKE NEWTON, SUPERINTENDENT  
JASPER COUNTY SCHOOLS**





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### Krysia Suttles

#### East Paulding High School, Paulding County Schools

... Mrs. Suttles wholeheartedly represented this young man as his "mother" on Senior Night at our school's last home football game. Knowing Tae and Mrs. Suttles the way our school community does, it was a touching moment to behold. Because of the efforts like those that Mrs. Suttles makes for our school and community, hope continues to exist within our hallowed halls.

**SCOTT TIERCE, TEACHER  
EAST PAULDING HIGH SCHOOL**

People may define hero in many ways, but if you were to ask anyone at East Paulding High School what a hero looks like to them, they would immediately describe Krysia Suttles. As an active parent leader in the high school's Football Booster Club, last January Krysia found herself changing the life of not only one student, but the entire school community. A biological mother to two sons, she now considers herself a proud mother of three as she took on the roll of unofficial foster mom for one of the school's football players who found himself homeless and without basic necessities.

As one of Paulding's school and community leaders, Krysia opened her heart and her family's home to this struggling young man encouraging him along the way to excel academically, athletically, and personally. A child who was once a poverty-stricken, parentless, lost soul with an uncertain future is now receiving letters from many of the nation's top post-secondary institutions seeking him for both his academic record and athletic abilities all because someone cared enough to lead by example.

Remarkably enough though, Krysia led without knowing anyone was looking. The school community has begun to change as a result of this one parent's generosity. Students, faculty, staff, family, and community members have begun to understand the impact that can be made on student success and achievement when they work together in partnership for the benefit of all.

Thanks to Krysia's caring effort a child has been saved and a school community is changing. This is just the beginning of a developing family, school, community partnership at East Paulding High School!



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**Dennis Holsey, Sr.**

**Hancock Central High School, Hancock County Schools**

**Title I School**

One could say that Dennis Holsey stays pretty busy serving in leadership roles throughout Hancock County and the state. This year alone he serves as the President of the School Council, President of Hancock Central Middle-High School's PTSO, President of the system-wide Parent Advisory Committee, and a member of the Georgia State School Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council. When asked why he is so active, many will respond that it is because of his unwavering commitment to the children of his district and the future of the Hancock community.

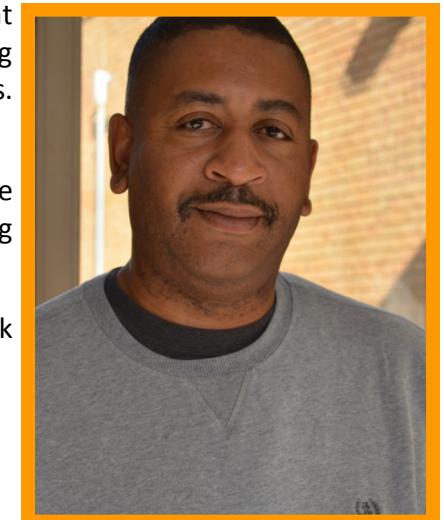
Dennis serves as a mentor to many students and their families throughout the district and is known as a motivational speaker by many. He is committed to increasing the involvement of all parents at every level of their children's education, and he is often found out in the community inviting and soliciting parent participation in school events. Parents respect him and see him as someone who can aid them in the support and success of their children. He has served as an editor for the system's parent newsletter and has led, organized, and participated in many parent workshops. He also makes it a point to model what supporting student success looks like to others by observing classrooms and conferencing regularly with teachers to collaborate in support of his child and others in the class. Through his work he has empowered parents to advocate for themselves.

Due to his leadership and efforts, Hancock County has seen parent involvement increase district wide over 60% and the system-wide Parent Advisory and School Council membership has increased from seven members to twenty five during his tenure as President. In addition, parent attendance at district and school level meetings has increased dramatically.

It is certain that Dennis's hard work, dedication, and commitment is making a difference in the lives of Hancock County's students and their families!

**Parents credit Mr. Holsey's example of involvement as a wake up call for them to become more actively involved in the education of their children. His participation has inspired others to embrace the school district's efforts to engage parents and the community in the education of our children.**

**MIRANDA WILSON, TITLE I/FEDERAL PROGRAMS DIRECTOR  
HANCOCK COUNTY SCHOOLS**





# What are Your Talents?

For more information about the Georgia Parent Leadership Awards please visit the  
Georgia Department of Education's Parent Engagement Website at:  
[http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss\\_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement](http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title.aspx?PageReq=ParentEngagement)



*Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent  
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"*

