

## For Immediate Release

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## Mary Merwin Voice for Children Award Presented to Legendary N. Michigan Early Childhood Leader

**TRAVERSE CITY, Mich.** – The Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay selected Cheryl Bloomquist to receive the Mary Merwin Voice for Children Award. Cheryl is a longtime member of Northwestern Michigan College faculty in the Social Science Department and beloved leader in a wide range of regional initiatives that have improved and expanded quality early childhood care and education.

Established in 2005, the Mary Merwin Voice for Children Award is presented by the Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay to an individual who has provided outstanding leadership, focus and action in the region’s early childhood field. The award honors its namesake for her steadfast commitment to serving pregnant women and young children.

“In addition to her own work supporting growth in the field, Cheryl has trained, nurtured and mentored new generations of early childhood professionals,” said Northwest Education Services Early Childhood Supervisor Yvonne Donohoe. “Her commitment and innovation has inspired a sharper focus on the development of young children as a high calling. Her efforts will continue to impact our communities for generations in the form of well-prepared educators, parents, caregivers and children.”

Award criteria include outstanding leadership in the care and support of pregnant women and young children; promotion of community investments in young children; and serving as an advocate with exemplary dedication in the field of early childhood education.

The Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay works to ensure children have a great start in life and equitable opportunity to achieve their highest potential. The first five years of life is a critical period of development and the organization is committed to creating and strengthening a family-friendly infrastructure to pay dividends for children. Visit <https://greatstartkids.com/>

As one of several agencies represented on the Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay, Northwest Education Services is the intermediate school district for Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties. Its Early Childhood professionals work with families of children age birth to 6 years to provide a strong foundation in early childhood development. Visit <https://www.northwested.org/academic-services/early-childhood-education/>

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Northwest Education Services Early Childhood Supervisor Yvonne Donohoe (left) presents the Mary Merwin Voice for Children Award to Cheryl Bloomquist at a meeting of the Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay.



Mary Merwin Voice for Children Award recipient, Cheryl Bloomquist