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Norwood primary carer takes top national award

A primary carer from Norwood in South Australia, dedicated to offering babies something more than routine, has won the Outstanding Educator award at the 2012 HESTA Early Childhood Education & Care Awards.

Amy Douglas — of Margaret Ives Community Children's Centre — is a primary carer for eight children in the baby room and a secondary carer for an additional 22 children.

Nominated for endeavouring to develop a greater understanding of young children and challenging their emerging skills, Ms Douglas stood out from more than 600 nominations.

The Outstanding Educator award acknowledges the achievements of an individual in the provision of outstanding early childhood education and care.

According to Ms Douglas, even as babies, each individual develops differently and therefore deserves a tailored learning experience. As such, she meticulously observes, documents and reports on the behaviours of each child and develops a specific plan for future learning.

"Despite their young age and limited communication ability, I am constantly impressed by the desire of children to learn and grow, and I do my best to encourage that growth," said Ms Douglas.

"Keeping records, both written and visual through photography, is a great way of monitoring the progress of each individual and after a while, you begin to see trends that differ from child to child.

"I make sure to identify these trends and build on each child's emerging behavioural patterns."

In one example, Ms Douglas handed a digital camera to one of the children, who immediately looked through the view finder, grasped the context of the camera and began taking pictures of the other children and staff. This, in itself, was then photographed and provided in a report to the child's parents.

Ms Douglas was praised by the judges for taking a lateral approach to caring, while continuing to follow the Early Years Learning Framework as a platform for her curriculum when caring for children in the zero-to-three age range.

Ms Douglas received a \$5,000 ME Bank online *EveryDay Transaction Account* and a \$5,000 education grant at a gala dinner in Perth last night. All prize money is provided by ME Bank.

HESTAA is one of Australia's largest super funds, with more than 750,000 members and \$20 billion in assets. It is chosen by more people in health and community services than any other fund.

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