

2025 Minnesota Head Start Heroes



Head Start Heroes is an annual event that honors members of the Minnesota Head Start community who overcame tremendous challenges and achieved personal and family success. These children, families, alumni, and staff members have been selected by the Minnesota Head Start Association Scholarships and Awards Committee based on compelling, personal testimonies about their Head Start experience and how they were able to transform their lives. The Head Start Heroes epitomize how determination, fortitude, and access to early learning and whole-family approaches can pave the way to lifelong success.

Minnesota Head Start Heroes Reception and Award Ceremony

Hosted by Cragun's Hotel & Resort in Brainerd, Minnesota on April 1, 2025 with lunch at 12:00 p.m. and the awards event at 1:00 p.m.

The Minnesota Head Start Association (MNHSA) mission is to advocate for low-income families and inspire high standards of service for young children by providing innovative leadership and programs to help children, families, and communities reach their full potential.



CATEGORY 1: STAFF MEMBER

Head Start alumni who has become involved in their local program as a staff member and demonstrates a passion for serving through advocacy, career growth, or being involved in Head Start, the community, or the state/national level that benefits Head Start families.

Emily Stangl

Tri-County Community Action Partnership



I first started working with Head Start when my son was three years old. At that time, we had just moved from Washington State back to the Pierz area where I grew up. Prior to moving, I had gone through a tough divorce. The relationship included domestic violence. Being a newly single mom, it was difficult, and overwhelming trying to navigate a new life and start over with next to nothing to my name. I had taken my son for a preschool screening at the school and there was a TCC staff handing out white cards and chatting with people about TCC and the programs they offered. I had never heard of TCC, but I was interested, and she told me it was income based. I met with a family advocate to do my application in the Little Falls building. It was very emotional as we talked about the divorce I went through and the abuse. She was so kind and sweet

and never made me feel judged or like I couldn't talk to her. My son started Head Start in the Pierz classroom, and the staff was amazing. They greeted him every day with a smile and a hug. The family advocate I worked with was also amazing at finding me resources and helping me feel supported whenever I needed it. She always made sure we had what we needed and was always willing to listen and make me feel heard. My youngest daughter is also still currently enrolled in EHS at TCC. Her teachers are amazing, and they always make me feel safe.

I began as a substitute teacher with TCC. After substituting for a while, I decided it was something I would like to pursue as a career. When there was an opening for an Assistant Teacher in a Head Start classroom, I quickly applied for the position and eagerly

accepted. I was in the Assistant Teacher role for one year before moving into the Lead Teacher position, which is my current role. Upon employment with TCC, I attended school to obtain my AAS Degree in Child Development. After obtaining that degree, I decided I wanted to further my education. I am currently enrolled in school for a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a Minor in Early Childhood Special Education.

I try to ensure every child comes to school and has a safe place to learn and grow. I am still currently in college and have worked hard to finish my degrees. I try to make sure all my families have the resources they need and feel supported, in not only their child's education, but in supporting the family as a whole.