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EDCOE Honored with Patriot Awards

*Written by EDCOE Leadership and Communications Intern Devin Johnson*

The National Guard recently presented Patriot Awards to the El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE) and two Child Development Program supervisors for going above and beyond to support an employee whose husband serves in the National Guard Reserve. Any member of the National Guard, Reserve or the spouse of a member may nominate an employer who has provided guidance, commitment, and support to them or their family. EDCOE, Assistant Director of Child Development Programs Gail Healy and Disabilities/Mental Health Coordinator Stacia Ponce received the awards at a County Board of Education Meeting in June.

Margarita Thomas, Early Head Start Teacher, submitted the award nominations, “When I got hired, my husband had just been deployed and would not be back until the following year. Stacia needed me to come in and complete paperwork. I didn’t have anyone to watch my two young children – two year old Alexander and four year old Ella. Stacia was very understanding and said, ‘That’s okay, bring them with you.’ Gail was always very supportive and worked with me when it came to attending early trainings since daycare didn’t open until 8 a.m. They made the deployment so much easier.”

The Employer Support of the Guard Reserve (ESGR) awards this honor to approximately 10,000 employers each year. This presentation occurred during a regular El Dorado County Board of Education meeting, and Stacia and Gail were unaware of the surprise acknowledgement. “Of course I was very honored, but I always had that feeling that there were 15 people behind me who gave just as much if not more than I did,” Gail expressed. “It really heightens our awareness of being sensitive and caring… That’s why we’re here; to make a difference.”

For more information about EDCOE, visit [www.edcoe.org](http://www.edcoe.org)

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Disabilities/Mental Health Coordinator Stacia Ponce, Early Head Start Teacher Margarita Thomas, Assistant Director of Child Development Programs Gail Healy and Employer Support of the Guard Reserve (ESGR) representative, after the surprise award presentation at the El Dorado County Board of Education meeting in June.