



I am WAGES®

Stacey Graham

Stacey Graham always loved working with children and started out as a substitute in the public schools. A friend opened a family child care home and shared how much she loved it and how rewarding it was. Stacey decided to follow suit and hasn't looked back. She has operated her own program since 2007 and from the outset she understood the importance of education. She started off with the North Carolina Early Childhood Credential, but knew that the basics were not enough to meet the needs of her children.

"Once I really started school, I said, 'Wow, I didn't know anything about working with children.'" Stacey continued, "You don't know what to teach if you don't go to school. You have to know what to look for in children to do the best by them."

Stacey kept pursuing her coursework while she maintained her child care home, and eventually earned her Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. According to Stacey, education has changed since she was young.

"There are a lot of expectations now for five year olds. They have to be able to do so many things. The more I learn, the more I can help them learn."

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--Stacey Graham

She wants to prepare her children for the next level. She feels that the Child Care WAGES® supplements help her do that, and she has received multiple increases in her awards due to her education gains.

"I love WAGES. Most of my check goes back into my program for the children. It often supports a special outing and helps my single parents who cannot afford that extra money. It was definitely an encouragement to return to school. I appreciate WAGES and T.E.A.C.H. A lot of things wouldn't have been possible without those two programs working together. They help providers get and do more. I hope both continue."

Stacey has accomplished so much with her child care program and two-year degree, but she doesn't want to stop. She's taking a summer course toward her Bachelor's Degree and in the fall, she plans to take a full course load and continue teaching. When she reflects on what makes her proud, it isn't just her education. She says that the children in her program don't leave until they age out. "One mom brought her son here when he was six weeks old and he stayed until he went to school. Even at age 11, he still wants to come back and see me. He lives in Florida now and asks to spend the summer here!"

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