

# THE best of CARE

**H**UNTSVILLE, Ala. — For a few hours this summer, someone else was making

UAW members Jacqueline Toney and Tasha Hereford feel special instead of the other way around.

The women were honored at a luncheon at the UAW-DaimlerChrysler Child Development Center here after completing their apprenticeship program as child-care specialists, the first graduates of the Union's Skilled Trades Department's Child Development Specialist Apprenticeship program.

The program provides on-the-job and classroom training that leads to professional, well-trained caregivers. For Hereford, it also led to something else: respect.

"It's a special honor because in the child-care profession, we don't get the respect or recognition we deserve," said Hereford, who, like Toney, graduated with honors and an associate's degree in child development from Calhoun Community College as part of the program.

"We do so much more than change dirty



**Jacqueline Toney**



**Tasha Hereford**

diapers and wipe runny noses," Hereford added.

The women, members of UAW Local 1929 in Huntsville, were awarded certificates of completion and specialist identification cards from Skilled Trades Department Director Rick Karas, who retired July 31.

Karas said the apprenticeship program began about four years ago when the department assembled a task force of child-care practitioners from the joint family programs the UAW runs with the Big Three. The automakers provided generous in-kind contributions of staff time and hosted the meetings, while the U.S. Department of Labor awarded the UAW a \$90,000 grant, he said.

"Our expertise is apprenticeship," Karas said. "The apprenticeship model can

be applied to many occupations."

The UAW's Work and Family Unit helped the department with the program, which was approved by the International Skilled Trades Advisory Committee and the union's International Executive Board.

**PHOTOS BY CHARLES SEIFRIED**





**Tasha Hereford, second from left, and Jacqueline Toney show off their certificates with, from left, Bill Peterson, administrative assistant to UAW Vice President Cal Rapson; retired Skilled Trades Department Director Rick Karas, and John Morris, skilled trades international representative.**

Child-care apprentices must complete 3,700 hours of on-the-job training and 300 hours of classroom instruction in a wide range of topics, including infant/toddler development, the foundations of child development, integrating children with special needs and diversity/cultural and community issues. Safety, health, first aid and building partnerships with families are part of the training.

Apprentices can receive credit for previous child-care experience.

### **'It's child development'**

Karas said "child care" is something of a misnomer.

"You don't want them to just be a baby sitter," he said. "You want somebody who is going to help

develop that child. That's the whole thing behind this: It's not child care. It's child development."

There is a critical need for high-quality child care. About 55 percent of the child-care workers in the United States make less than \$8.50 an hour. Only 14 occupations pay less. Not surprisingly, turnover is high.

According to a study by the Center for the Child Care Workforce, the average turnover between 1999 and 2000 in centers it studied in Northern California was 30 percent.

When child-care workers leave their jobs, roughly half leave the field entirely.

And those people who left the field can expect to earn an average

of \$8,000 a year more than those who stay in the field but change jobs.

The report noted the strong link between staff pay and the quality of care. Centers that were more able to retain highly trained staff were more likely to retain high quality care over time.

Karas said one advantage of the UAW apprenticeship program is that it raises wages as the worker's level of education and experience increases.

Gary Casteel, director of UAW Region 8, where the center is located, congratulated the women, telling them it was proof that when people apply themselves, good things happen.

He also noted that the program is

further proof of the UAW's ongoing commitment to families. "What we strive for here is about our families, our children," Casteel said.

### 'It was scary'

For Jacqueline Toney, the most difficult part of the apprenticeship program was returning to school after so many years.

"The idea of going to a college setting with people right out of high school was challenging. It was scary."

She used her 13 years of experience in child care to guide her through her classes.

"We took ideas into the classroom as well," she said. "Our center is No. 1 at making teachers into real

teachers."

She praised the UAW for giving her the opportunity to better herself and enrich the lives of children at the same time.

"It's very overwhelming," she said of the ceremony.

"I didn't know what would come out of this when I entered the program."

Hereford said she appreciated the apprenticeship program because it gave her the theories and reasoning behind the teaching and child-care methods she uses each day.

"It tells you why you are doing what you are doing," she said.

The center, which opened in 1992 and is operated by the UAW-DaimlerChrysler National Training

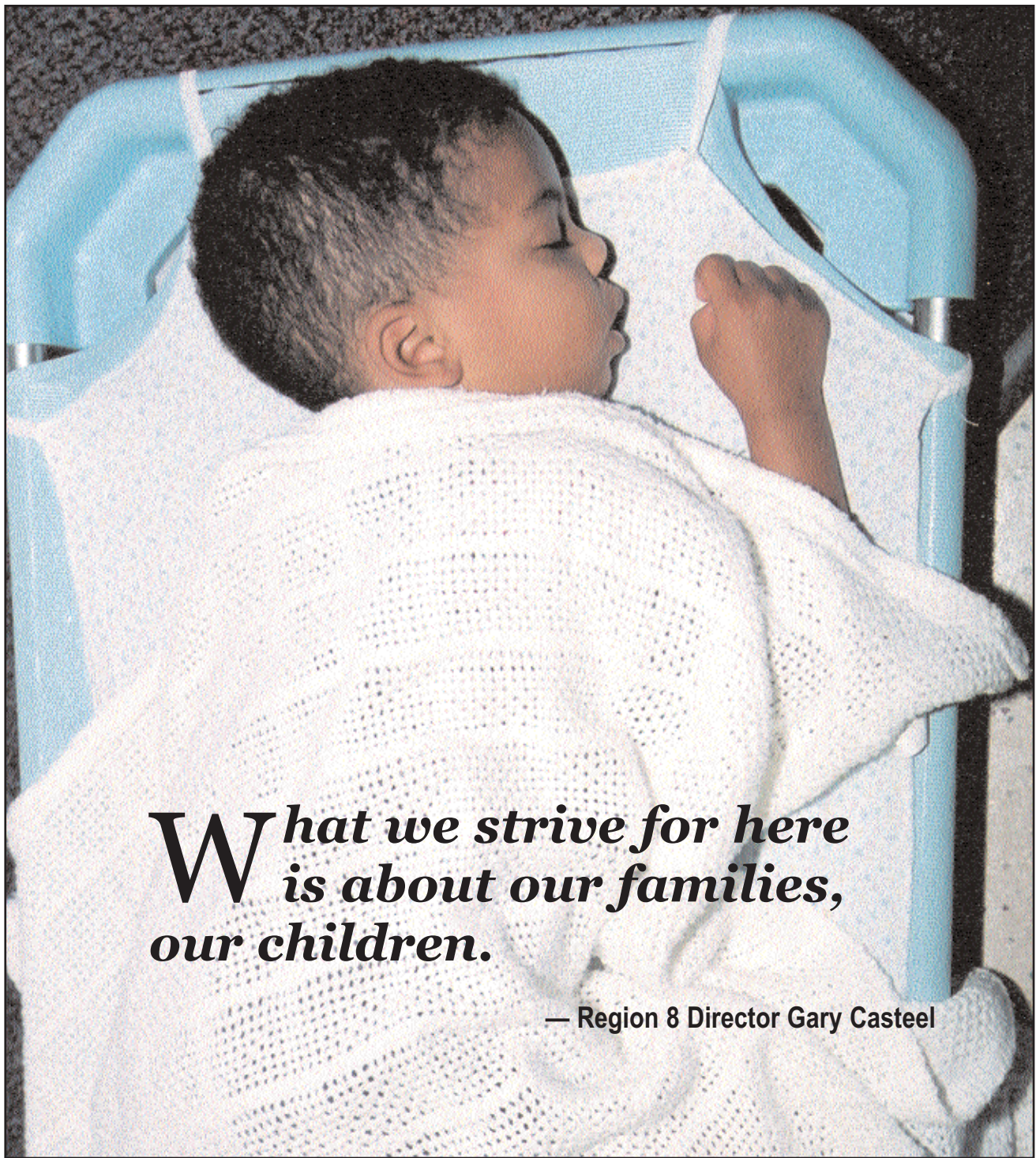
“

We took ideas into the classroom as well. Our center is No. 1 at making teachers into real teachers.

JACQUELINE TONEY

”





***What we strive for here  
is about our families,  
our children.***

**— Region 8 Director Gary Casteel**

Center, has about 60 employees who care for about 230 children of UAW Locals 1413 and 1929 and other children in the community.

It provides care beginning at 6 weeks old through kindergarten. It

also has special before- and after-school programs for older children and summer programs.

Martha Ginn, center director, said the apprenticeship program helps give peace of mind to

employees at the nearby DaimlerChrysler Huntsville Electronics plant. "It's enriched our center," she said. "They'll go the extra mile for the children as well as the parents." ●