

Easler honored for helping give children a head start

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Rosemary Easler has worked with the Family Development Program of Head Start for more than 40 years.

Years of dedication to others will not go unnoticed as Rosemary Easler retires from more than 40 years with the Community Action Agency's Family Development Program of Head Start in Hillsdale. A retirement party will be held in her honor from 1-3p.m. April 21 at the CAA gymnasium, 55 Barnard St., Hillsdale.

"As a long time Head Start teacher, she has positively influenced not only her students, but their families, other staff and members of the community," said Jody Schaedler of CAA. Co-workers Schaedler and Julie White, among others, wanted to see Easler receive the thanks from many she has helped over the years. "Many current and previous Head Start teachers and student teachers from Jackson Community College (JCC) and Hillsdale College have considered her a great mentor and are still in contact with her," Schaedler said. "She is great missed by all at CAA." Easler lives on Card Road with her husband Jerry. They raised three daughters and have eight grandchildren. Two of their daughters are teachers.

Easler started her involvement with Head Start as a parent volunteer in January 1971 and she started teaching in 1972. "They asked me to develop the creative environment workshop, which was a room with nothing but lumber when I started," Easler said. "It was a program to help parents use their abilities and resources to be creative. We collected all kinds of things and made crafts and toys." That workshop became the start of the toy lending library, she said. Easler then became a home visit teacher and she worked with both the parents and the children. She also worked for a year as assistant director of day care in Pittsford and they worked another year in Waldron. "I went wherever I was needed," Easler said. "They always called me Miss Rosemary." The work was rewarding by using teachable moments that don't always come out of a book, she added.

"It's great to see the children succeed," she said. "They learn to be positive about themselves and their families as they prepare for life experiences." By developing future leaders in society, Easler now enjoys hearing from former students who are Girl Scout leaders, police officers and firemen. "No matter where I go I see them and they all seem to know me," she said. While teaching, she had several grandmothers who came to volunteer each week and the grandparent program has flourished over the years, providing an intergenerational possibility for the children.

"You don't even have to be a grandparent," she said. "It's for people who want to have contact with young children." Easler has also enjoyed building a network with the various public schools, Intermediate School District, the County Extension office and area libraries. "It's been a good support system for me – like anywhere you work for a long time, the people are your family." Upon retirement, Easler said she will spend more time relaxing, quilting and visiting two children who live out west. She also fills her time at the Research Center next to the Hillsdale Community Library and is active at St. Anthony's Catholic Church, where she quilts and participates in preparations for the annual Christmas Eve dinner. As for her work at Head Start, she said she will miss it. "I love all those kids," she said. "And their families helped me more than I helped them."