



Press Release: *Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities Announces 2024 Paraeducator of the Year Award Recipient*

(For Immediate Release)

January 12, 2024

The Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities is pleased to announce Ms. Isabella (Bella) Vitaoe as the recipient of the 2024 Paraeducator of the Year Award. This award recognizes excellence in paraeducators who support students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities.

Ms. Vitaoe, a paraeducator in a specialized classroom for students with extensive support needs at Rapid Run Middle School in Ohio, is recognized as a fierce advocate for her students. Described as having an uncanny ability to connect with her students and take initiative when needed, Ms. Vitaoe has earned praise from nominators. Mr. Evan Horn mentioned that she is, "the most dedicated and committed educator I have ever had the pleasure of knowing." Mr. Tyler Reese added that she "truly shows the care and dedication to her craft and to her students."

This distinguished award is presented by The Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), a special interest association within the Council for Exceptional Children—the largest international professional organization dedicated to supporting the needs of students with disabilities. Since its establishment in 1963, DADD has been a leading voice in the field of education for students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities, actively contributing to research dissemination, the creation of nationally recognized professional practice standards, and fostering robust professional networking. The award ceremony is scheduled to take place at DADD's annual conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, on January 18, 2024.

For further information, please contact Dr. Jordan Shurr, DADD Awards Chair, at j.shurr@queensu.ca. Additional details about the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities can be found at <http://www.daddcec.com/>.