



EveryChild California's Circle of Excellence
October 2019
Jared Dobbins
Executive Director
Tots Early Learning Center

EveryChild California is proud to recognize Jared Dobbins as the October recipient of the Circle of Excellence award.

Jared Dobbins is the Executive Director of VIP Tots Early Learning Center which serves the Hemet/San Jacinto Valley in Southern California. VIP Tots mission is to *create engaging, inclusive environments where young children learn, and adults have access to positive solutions for supporting children*. Founded in 1979, VIP Tots is a non-profit Early Learning Center committed to providing high-quality inclusive early learning environments for children with special needs as well as their typically developing peers.

Born and raised just outside of Birmingham, Alabama, Jared received a Bachelor's Degree from Auburn University and holds a Master's Degree from Southern Seminary. In 2008 he moved to Riverside, California and took a position as the Assistant Director of Mobilization where he served until 2015. In 2015 he took a position as Coordinator for Special Programs in the Office of Undergraduate Education at the University of California, Riverside. Jared held adjunct professor positions in Intercultural Studies as well as Global Studies at California Baptist University and served as an adjunct professor in the College of Extended Learning at California State University, San Bernardino.

In 2017 Jared began his tenure as Executive Director at VIP Tots. Jared was married to his wife Julie in 2010 and currently live in Riverside with their two boys, Parker (4) and Everett (2). Thank you, Jared for taking time out from your busy schedule to answer our questions.

1. What has been most rewarding about your career in early education so far?
 - a. Coming out of a 9-year career in higher education, the transition to a career as an administrator in an early education environment had a lot of challenges and hurdles in the early days of my time at VIP Tots. Getting into a groove of being an administrator in an early education environment took some time to discern how best to lead my staff in a very different environment than I came out of in higher education.
 - b. That being said, the most rewarding thing to date in my time as an early education administrator has been seeing the growth in our administrative as well as our teaching

staff. They have joined me in facing the challenges of a changing landscape in early education and the need to alter some of the ways we have historically done things in the past in order to meet the challenges that we face in the changing landscape of our service area.

2. If you could give advice to someone who is new in the administrative role, what would it be?

a. For me, the game changer time and again has been the networking and educational opportunities I have chosen to be a part of, chief among them being those offered by Every Child California (in the early days, CCDAA). My membership in this organization has been so vital to my growth as an administrator. About two weeks after I accepted the position as Executive Director at VIP Tots, I attended my first Great Administrators Seminar in Monterey (2017). I still look back to that conference as a turning point in my tenure as I spent hours that second night connecting with other administrators from my area, mostly because I'm sure they saw the "deer in the headlights", look I wandered around that first conference with. The relationships I made at that first conference are among the most solid that I have in the Early Education field to this day. SO, I would say take advantage of every networking opportunity you can get, and don't be afraid to wander around looking like you might not be comfortable yet, or to ask for help, because there are ALWAYS others in the field looking out for the new guy or gal and are willing to take you under their wing(s), if you're willing to ask for help.

3. What is your proudest accomplishment in your career?

a. Fortunately, there have been many highlights and accomplishments I've been able to see our team achieve over the past 2+ years. The one I am most personally proud of, is the effort I undertook alongside our Board of Directors to do a complete and total rebrand of our organization. Our look, logo, and branding was about 25 years outdated, and it was a huge undertaking. Aside from the work involved in any rebrand, for a nonprofit that had been in operation for almost 40 years at the time, much of our identity, both internally and externally, had been tied up in the way we looked historically. So being aware of that led me to tread slowly and carefully in presenting the idea as well as executing the idea. I wanted to honor the tradition of who we were, keep the DNA of who we are, and look forward (with a fresh face) of who we want to be. We managed to pull that off after about a 9 month period of working with Board, Staff, Parents and a top notch designer. I couldn't be more proud of the way it all worked out!

Congratulations Jared, for your support and efforts on behalf of the children of California and EveryChild California. If you would like to nominate an EveryChild California member for the Circle of Excellence, please email us at info@everychildca.org