

Press Release

For more press information, contact
Karen Hartley, Chair, Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc.

Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc. Accredited by the Standards for Excellence Institute® Earns Seal of Excellence

Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc. is a recipient of the Standards for Excellence Institute's Seal of Excellence for successfully completing their rigorous accreditation program. Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc. voluntarily opened itself up to analysis by a "jury of its peers." The peer review team examined Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc. for compliance with the *Standards for Excellence®: An Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector*, in areas including: Mission, Strategy and Evaluation; Leadership: Board, Staff, and Volunteers; Legal Compliance and Ethics; Finance and Operations; Resource Development; and Public Awareness, Engagement, and Advocacy.

The Standards for Excellence Institute evaluates fundamental values such as honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, trust, responsibility, and accountability, all of which are inherently important in the nonprofit world. Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc.'s programs and services, management, fundraising and financial practices were subjected to in-depth examination prior to earning accreditation.

Karen Hartley, Chair of Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc. comments, "The opportunity to participate in the training and learning process of working to prepare for meeting the Standards for Excellence for Nonprofits criteria was not a simple or easy process. Ferst Readers has always been an all-volunteer organization and was beginning to consider how we could continue to grow and how to prepare for that growth and management. The timing was right. There was much to learn and many discussions to work out details for new policies and procedures. We now have a complete set of plans, policies, and procedures on how we operate, and a strong system to move into the future. Our organization has grown in our outlook and in our practices and we look forward to the potential ahead."

"The Standards of Excellence process for accreditation provides a structured approach to building capacity, accountability and sustainability in our organization. It designates the high quality of Ferst Readers of Carroll County and provides credibility for improving the public's trust of the organization as we work to fulfill our mission of strengthening our community by providing quality books and literacy resources for children and families to use at home during the earliest stages of development," says Karen Wild, of Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc.'s Board.

The Standards for Excellence Institute is committed to raising the level of principled and responsible practices within the nonprofit sector. The Institute offers a model for organizations to implement in their operating plans so they can gain a deeper understanding of their effectiveness, improve their decision-making and minimize risks. Nonprofits that adhere to the principles and practices of strong nonprofit management and governance can become formally accredited under the Standards for Excellence® program.

A recent university study of 102 nonprofit organizations that have received the Standards for Excellence accreditation compared with peer organizations of similar size and industry examined the impact of becoming accredited. Significant findings found that the process is associated with an increase direct public support.

Researchers found that nonprofit organizations' stakeholders will react positively to organizations earning

the Standards for Excellence accreditation by allocating more resources to the nonprofit. The Standards for Excellence program provides a structured approach to improved operations and quality management, delivering years of benchmarking and best practices to organizations' leadership, and a "Good Housekeeping"-type seal of approval to outside stakeholders, indicating that the organization is performing as promised after comprehensive evaluation by practitioners and industry experts.

About Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc.

Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc. is a tax exempt, charitable nonprofit whose mission is to develop literacy among young children. Early reading experiences enhance children's chances of becoming successful students, and ultimately, educable members of the area work force.

Ferst Readers "strengthens communities by providing quality books and literacy resources for children and their families to use at home during the earliest stages of development." Ferst Readers wants every child to have the best start in life – and nothing helps a baby's brain develop more than exposure to rich language and loving interactions. The key is having books in the home and being read to – right from birth. Our vision is "to create better learners, brighter futures, and stronger communities by giving every child under five access to quality books in their homes." You can learn more about Ferst Readers of Carroll County by visiting <https://carrollferst.org/>.

About the Standards for Excellence Institute

The Standards for Excellence originated as a special initiative of Maryland Nonprofits in 1998 and has since expanded into a national program to help nonprofit organizations achieve the highest benchmarks of ethics and accountability in nonprofit governance, management and operations. The program has been formally adopted by ten state, regional and national affiliate organizations, and is supported by nearly 80 Licensed Consultants and over 100 volunteers with professional experience in nonprofit governance and administration. Since its inception, the program has accredited or recognized over 200 individual nonprofit organizations that completed a rigorous application and review process to demonstrate adherence to the *Standards for Excellence: An Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector*. www.standardsforexcellenceinstitute.org.

A celebration ceremony was held for the Ferst Readers of Carroll County, Inc. and their board members on November 9, 2020 at The Burson Center.



Pictured from left to right: Karen Wild, Debbie Ross (Ferst Readers Regional Coordinator), Erin Brannon, Karen Hartley, Anna Berry (Alice Huffard Richards Fund), Martha Ann Saunders, Deborah Wilson, Taylor Key, and Sheila Reed. All are Ferst Readers of Carroll County Board members unless otherwise noted.