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**WGTE'S KATHLEEN SMITH WINNER OF PRESTIGIOUS 2010 IRENE BANDY-  
HEDDEN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Toledo, OH – The Ohio Department of Education, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, has presented the 2010 Irene Bandy-Hedden Early Childhood Education Leadership Award in the Pedagogical Leadership category to Kathleen Smith, WGTE Public Media's Director of Early Learning and Outreach.

For the past five years, the Ohio Department of Education has honored individuals selected by their peers as leaders in advancing early education and care. Each of the award recipients has made a difference in the lives of children, their families, and their teaching and/or community partners. All were nominated for the honor as they went about their work—work that often is done quietly in service of children who may need special attention or families who need extra support.

Over the past 11 years, Ms. Smith has managed and developed WGTE's early childhood initiatives. In particular, Ms. Smith has acted as a trusted advisor for the national PBS Kids' Raising Readers project, which is focused on improving reading and literacy skills in young, disadvantaged children by bringing literacy messages to parents in targeted, low-income areas in 20 select markets. It was because of her leadership in early childhood education that WGTE was named one of the first five stations to receive the PBS Kids' Raising Readers grant funding to connect parents and caregivers with engaging and educational programs, activities and overall messaging that "Anytime is Learning Time."

Through her hard work and dedication, Ms. Smith has developed meaningful relationships and trust in the targeted, Toledo-area communities selected for the Raising Readers project. "I believe that learning takes place in relationships," said Smith. "As an organization, WGTE needed to build trust with those community organizations that already were held in high esteem by our parents and caregivers. We have seen huge gains in emergent literacy skills in our neighborhoods because we combined the wonderful content from PBS with strong community relationships."

Ms. Smith, a graduate of both Lourdes College and Owens Community College, has also been the state project coordinator for Ohio's Ready to Learn, funded by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, which provides professional development for primarily family childcare providers. For ten years, Ms. Smith has written the statewide curriculum, purchased all of the resources materials, and conducted train the trainer sessions for colleagues at all eight Ohio Public Television stations.

“Kathy Smith is a true leader in the area of early childhood education,” stated Marlon P. Kiser, President and CEO, WGTE Public Media. “She sees the difference early education makes in the lives of our children. Her passion and drive make it possible for more of our children to arrive at school ready to learn, not ready to remediate.”

Ms. Smith has been recognized over the years with numerous awards and honors, including: the Media Excellence Award, Ohio Nutrition Council; Shining Star Award, Outstanding Child Advocate, Toledo Association for the Education of Young Children; Outstanding Safety Advocate, Greater Toledo SAFE KIDS Coalition; YWCA Childcare Connections, Volunteer of the Year; PBS Ready To Learn Service Award; Ohio Educational Technology Telecommunications Network Commission Promotion Award; and the Professional Development Award, National Council of Community Relations. She is currently a member and past secretary of the Toledo Area Association for the Education of Young Children; Shining Star Co-Chair; member of the Greater Toledo Early Literacy Council, Northwest Ohio Afterschool Alliance and Owens Community College Teacher Education Advisory Board.

For more information, photos, or to schedule an interview, please contact Jen Homier at 419-380-4655.

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WGTE Public Media (The Public Broadcasting Foundation of Northwest Ohio) is a non-profit organization providing quality broadcasting and educational resources to Northwest and West Central Ohio and Southeast Michigan for 55 years. WGTE Public Media operates WGTE TV, Toledo; WGTE FM 91.3, Toledo; WGLE FM 90.7, Lima; WGBE FM 90.9, Bryan; WGDE FM 91.9, Defiance; [wgte.org](http://wgte.org); The Educational Resource Center; and The Early Learning and Outreach Center.