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Youlanda Upkins

Vice President of Early Learning

Youlanda Upkins is vice president of the Metro Atlanta YMCA/Early Childhood Development Co.(ECDC), LLC's Head Start/Early Head Start program. She has served in the capacity of Head Start/Early Head Start Director here at the YMCA/ECDC for over 14 years and has been an aggressive advocate for Georgia's early learning community for more than 20 years.

Her lifelong affinity and association with Head Start began when she was enrolled as a young student in the program in her hometown of Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Upon receiving her degree in 1986, Youlanda joined the Jackson County Civic Action Committee Head Start Program as a Special Services Coordinator – returning to the program where she was once enrolled.

Youlanda and the ECDC staff provide services to 1,998 preschoolers, infants, toddlers and families in five counties that include Fulton in the Metro Atlanta area, as well as Barrow, Morgan, Elbert and Greene Counties in Northeast Georgia.

With extensive experience in working with and forging partnerships between national, state and local agencies as well as community groups, Youlanda has helped yield positive brand recognition for the YMCA as well as the mission and vision of the Head Start Program. Widely recognized on the national level in the child development community, Youlanda has participated in the prestigious Johnson and Johnson Fellow Program and served as the Vice President of the Black Child Development Institute – Atlanta Affiliate for 4 years and currently continues to serve in an advisory capacity.

Youlanda holds a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Early Childhood Development from the University of Southern Mississippi. She has earned multiple professional certifications, including the University of California Los Angeles - Anderson Graduate School of Management. In addition, she has served as a Leadership Coach at the NIKE sponsored NHSA Starting Block Leadership Training Academy since 2007 and was the proud recipient of the Education Award that same year.

Prior to serving as Head Start/Early Head Start Director, she worked as the YMCA's Metro Pre-School Director, Education Program Analyst and Program/Licensing Specialist with the Georgia Pre-K Program Office of School Readiness (Bright From the Start).

Youlanda is married to Stephen Upkins and the proud parents of three children who also have been initiated into the Y family.