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Primrose Schools President and CEO Named Regional Winner of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the Service Category

ATLANTA (June 27, 2011) – Jo Kirchner, president and CEO of Primrose Schools, has been named one of the winners of the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year award in the Alabama/Georgia/Tennessee region. Kirchner won in the service category for her visionary leadership in educational child care. The winners of this coveted award, which is renowned in the business community as the world's most prestigious award for entrepreneurs, were revealed at a gala event on June 23 at the InterContinental Hotel in Atlanta.

"This honor is a credit to Jo's leadership not only at Primrose Schools but in early childhood education," said Dr. Mary Zurn, vice president of education for Primrose Schools. "Her strong belief in Primrose's balanced learning approach motivated her to take the organization to a recognized position of leadership in early childhood education. She is passionate about improving the future of education for children and our country, and her extraordinary leadership inspires others to also strive for excellence."

Kirchner will move forward to compete to be one of the National Entrepreneur of the Year Award winners, which will be announced during the Ernst and Young National Awards Gala set to take place November 12, 2011 in Palm Springs, Calif.

Kirchner joined Primrose in 1990, leaving her self-owned successful marketing company to pursue her passion for supporting young children.

"When I first visited a Primrose School about 20 years ago, I saw an environment that I wish my children could have experienced when they were in preschool. It was obvious that Primrose's balanced curriculum was making a significant difference in children's lives, and I knew I wanted to be a part of that difference," Kirchner said. "I am deeply honored by this recognition, and believe it speaks to the positive impact Primrose has had on young children and on the early childhood education industry."

At Primrose, Kirchner helped develop the concept of franchising a premier educational environment and innovate Primrose's Balanced Learning® curriculum, which blends child-initiated play with teacher-guided instruction and a special emphasis on character development. Believing strongly in the need for consistent, high-quality educational standards, Kirchner also led Primrose to become the first national preschool organization in the country to achieve gold-standard AdvancED accreditation.

Under Kirchner's leadership, Primrose has grown from four schools in Atlanta to more than 220 schools in 17 states, despite the challenges of two recessions. Gifted at recognizing opportunities in difficult times, Kirchner has steered Primrose forward by investing in its people, excelling in service delivery and focusing on a quality foundation for children. Today, Primrose is on track for continued, quality growth. The organization is striving to double in size and begin international consideration within the next seven years.

Kirchner works to improve access and quality in education across America and internationally as a board member of AdvancED, the Early Education & Care Consortium and Growing Leaders. Her commitment to improving the lives of young children extends beyond the classroom as well: she founded the Primrose Children's Foundation to support child-focused, not-for-profit organizations. With

Kirchner's direction, the foundation has donated more than \$750,000 to Ronald McDonald House charities; sent literacy and learning kits to children in Afghanistan, the Philippines and Panama; invested more than \$830,000 in Reach Out and Read's child literacy work; and promoted physical activity through a national partnership with Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

Kirchner is a member of the Leadership Atlanta Class of 2011 and the International Franchise Association. She was named AdvancED's Excellence in Education Award Winner in 2010 and one of *Catalyst magazine* Top 25 Entrepreneurs in Atlanta in 2007.

About Primrose Schools

Founded in 1982, Primrose Schools is the nation's leader in providing consistent, accredited early childhood education and [child care](#) services in more than 220 schools in 17 states. The foundation of Primrose Schools is based on a dedicated and passionate group of early childhood professionals providing high quality education with a balance of learning, character development and play. Primrose School's Balanced Learning® Curriculum blends teacher-directed and child-initiated activities and is consistently delivered in all Primrose Schools nationwide. This exclusive curriculum is standards-based and enables teachers to help children build a foundation of knowledge and skills that will enable them to move successfully from one level of development to the next. Primrose is the first preschool organization in the country to achieve the gold standard in educational accreditation from AdvancED and to require all of its schools to become SACS CASI or NCA CASI accredited. For more information, visit www.primroseschools.com.

About Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year is the world's most prestigious business award for entrepreneurs. The unique award makes a difference through the way it encourages entrepreneurial activity among those with potential, and recognizes the contribution of people who inspire others with their vision, leadership and achievement. As the first and only truly global award of its kind, Entrepreneur of the Year celebrates those who are building and leading successful, growing and dynamic businesses, recognizing them through regional, national and global awards programs in more than 140 cities in more than 50 countries.

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