Edith Abakare, Award Recipient

From Edith Abakare, 2016 recipient of the Phil Pickens award:

Just a little under 7 years ago I joined ranks with an awesome group of Moms and Dads across the state of Georgia who were actively engaged in the work of building bridges between home and school. I was so excited that I had been given the opportunity to join this group of work-a-bees.

From the smiles, tears , cookies and truths I felt so empowered to know that I was not alone. I followed their leads as I began to support parents in my local district with the knowledge that I  gleaned from my own personal experience with my daughter coupled with the many shared stories from my new found mentor-hood group.

Within our great work there is always nestled in my thoughts a huge,” thank you” to the visionary of the Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership. That’s Phil Pickens, Director of Special Education at the State Level who had a heart for parental engagement. Mr. Pickens wanted parents to have a seat at the table with teachers and administrators and community partners. His vision was that in order for parents to be comfortable in that seat they needed trainers and friends to equip them with the knowledge they needed to build positive relationships as they partnered with schools and community to insure that students with disabilities received a free and appropriate public education.

I never met Mr. Pickens. I am sure you are wondering how I know so much about him. Well,  that’s because  stories of his support have been shared over and over again within the partnership and we owe him for that vote of confidence that parents can and will do the work if giving the opportunity.

So with that being said, each year an award is given to one parent mentor and one director who have excelled in the work and pushed past themselves to roll of outstanding leadership at the local and state level. I can never tell you how humbling it was to be nominated for such a distinguished award. It was indeed an honor that someone saw me in a crowd of 100 plus mentors and felt that I should be nominated.

What a joy to be even  considered . Well at kickoff 2016, Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership awarded me the PHIL PICKENS PARENT MENTOR LEADERSHIP AWARD. When my name was called I was completely shocked. I jumped up and shouted, Metro Rocks! And ran to my fellow region members and asked them to take the floor with me. You see, the win was not for me it was a win for Metro Region for allowing me to grow with them as Regional Representative for 2 years.

It was a win for Phil because his vision continues as we work, collaborate and  celebrate  each other on the way to successfully engaging parents to be active participants in their child’s education.