

TOOTRiS Congratulates Rural Pathways on Winning the 2025 Wings of Innovation Platinum Award

Minnesota initiative honored for pioneering a sustainable model that strengthens Child Care access in rural communities

SAN DIEGO, CA, UNITED STATES, October 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- TOOTRiS is thrilled to congratulate [Rural Pathways](#), based in Duluth, Minnesota, on being selected as the Platinum Award Winner in the [2025 Wings of Innovation CCR&R Awards](#) for their Enhanced Two-Tier Provider Partnership Model.



Rural Pathways wins Platinum Award

Rural Pathways, in partnership with Iron Range Tykes Learning Center, stood out among national finalists — including Child Care Aware of Missouri, Child Care Aware of Kentucky, PATCH Hawaii, Child Care Aware of Kansas, and MountainHeart South CCR&R — for their bold, scalable approach to addressing severe Child Care deserts.

Their Enhanced Two-Tier Provider Partnership Model leverages Section 45F employer-provided Child Care tax credits as well as community-driven funding streams to bring new private dollars into the Child Care ecosystem. The model ensures that providers are paid living wages, reduces turnover, and expands access for families — all while creating sustainable, replicable systems for rural communities.

The award was announced during TOOTRiS' [Wind Beneath Your Wings Summit](#), which drew hundreds of Child Care leaders from across the nation to reimagine and strengthen the future of Child Care. As part of the Summit, the Wings of Innovation Awards spotlight transformative, local solutions making a difference today and offering models for tomorrow. Other award winners included Child Care Aware of Missouri, Child Care Aware of Kentucky, PATCH Hawaii, Child Care Aware of Kansas, and MountainHeart South CCR&R.

"Rural Child Care providers are innovators, and with the right tools and partnerships, they can

transform access to high-quality, sustainable care,” said Staci Gilpin, co-founder and co-owner of Rural Pathways. “Working alongside Shawntel Gruba and Iron Range Tykes has been instrumental in designing and proving this model.”

“Rural Pathways’ achievement embodies the mission of the Wings of Innovation Awards — bold ideas that can scale, improve provider stability, and open up access for families everywhere,” said Alessandra Lezama, CEO of TOOTRiS. “We’re inspired by their work, and by all of the awardees this year, whose creativity and perseverance are forging new paths for Child Care across the country.”

About Rural Pathways

Rural Pathways is a women-owned consultancy headquartered in Duluth, Minnesota, that develops innovative, community-based solutions to expand access to Child Care in rural America. By forging strong partnerships among families, providers, and employers, Rural Pathways builds sustainable models that deliver equitable access, economic stability, and thriving local economies. Learn more at ruralpathways.org.

About TOOTRiS

TOOTRiS is the nation’s largest Child Care platform that partners with employers, providers, government agencies, and Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) organizations to strengthen local Child Care ecosystems, amplify the impact of community-based initiatives, and make care more accessible, equitable, and sustainable — empowering parents, supporting providers, and fueling economic growth. Learn more at tootris.com.

Jeff McAdam

TOOTRiS

+1 7209880984

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Facebook](#)

[X](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/856862200>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.