



Stepping UP For Kids Awards Luncheon



**Foster Parents and Agency Staff Honored for Heroic Service;
Missouri First Lady Sheena Greitens Joins in Praise
October 6, 2017**



Over 300 guests joined Missouri First Lady Sheena Greitens in honoring resource families and agency staff for outstanding service to children in foster and adoptive care at the fourth annual **Stepping Up for Kids Awards Luncheon** on Oct. 6, 2017 at Norwood Hills Country Club.

ABOVE. Front row from left: Stephanie Littlejohn, St. Louis Family Court Juvenile Division (Honoree); Bridget Viridure, Youth In Need (Honoree); Guest Speaker, Missouri First Lady Sheen Greitens; Kenya Willis, Missouri Children's Division (Honoree); Robyne Wilson-Cima, Foster Parent (Honoree).

Second row from left: Brenda Maly, Co-Chair, St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network; Kelly Sullivan, Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition (Honoree); Janice Smith, Foster Parent (Honoree); Yolanda West, Co-Chair, St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network; Ruth Ehresman, Vision for Children at Risk.



Emcee Cynthia Williams from Washington University Brown School of Social Work engaged the audience.



First Lady Greitens: "It is both our aspiration and our responsibility to make Missouri the best state in the country for taking care of our foster children. Today we honor the people whose daily work moves us closer and closer to that goal. So as we celebrate our award recipients today, I want to say thank you to all of you who work every day to make sure that every child in Missouri is safe and loved. "



Stepping UP For Kids Awards Luncheon



The audience of over 300 enjoys the program.



The Riverview Gardens High School Jazz Ensemble provided outstanding entertainment.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Funds raised at the Stepping Up for Kids Awards Luncheon support the work of the St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network, a coalition of over 200 organizations dedicated to improving the lives of children and families who have been impacted by abuse or neglect and to strengthen families to prevent child abuse or neglect. The Network includes social service organizations, the Missouri Children's Division, parents, courts, police and more. Programs include advocacy, education and networking. Vision for Children at Risk provides staff support.

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2017 HONOREES

Janice Smith

Resource Family

"I am proud to know and work with Jan Smith. She has a lifelong commitment...and a passion to provide the best of care to the children who are placed with her."

Janice Smith and her husband began fostering children almost 33 years ago. When Jim passed away in 1994, it was a devastating loss to his family and to the foster care community. Jan courageously decided to continue what has been her lifelong passion and commitment. She has not only influenced the lives of more than 100 children of all ages and races, many with a variety of challenges, but also the lives of the workers who enter her home. Janice develops rapport with biological

parents, grandparents, relatives and other foster parents. Kind and compassionate, Janice welcomes all who enter her home as family members. It is not surprising that many whom she cared for return regularly. "I am proud to know and work with Jan Smith.

She has a lifelong commitment to helping and a passion to provide the best care to the children who are placed with her."



Robyne Wilson-Cima

Treatment Foster Parent

"Robyne is the epitome of dedication!"

Compassion, creativity, and generosity have been the hallmarks of Robyne Wilson-Cima's 15 years as a Treatment Foster Parent. Recognizing the importance of the bond a 16-year-old had developed with another girl while in residential treatment, Robyne advocated having the friend also placed in her home. She works to incorporate the cultures of the youth placed with her into her home. Who else would have thought post-its labeling home items in two languages and cooking would be the way to bond? Scrapbooking and other hands-on activities are other ways Robyne connects with youth. She



tries to connect with those whom the youth identify as positive supports as well. This includes dinners with aunts and uncles, and even a surprise party. And of course, there are real vacations in Florida for her youth. Robyne is the epitome of dedication!

Stephanie Littlejohn

St. Louis Family Court, Juvenile Division

"The hero who saved my life."

For 33 years at Juvenile Court and seven years prior at the Missouri Division of Family Services, Stephanie Littlejohn has stood up to the challenge of making life-changing decisions for children and their families. Stephanie assures that children and their families have what they need regardless of the cost. As a DJO, she faces the anger of children, and often uncooperative and hostile behavior. One of her memorable youth was a 14-year-old girl who struggled in numerous foster homes because of her behaviors and chronic running. Several years lat-

er, this young girl attended Forest Park Community College and took the time to seek out Stephanie. She presented her with an English composition titled, "My Hero Who Saved My Life." Stephanie was renewed in her belief that the work she does, no matter how hard or low long it takes, is important and worth the effort.



2017 HONOREES

Kelly Sullivan

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition

“Kelly’s work with youth is unmatched by anyone in the field.”

Kelly, a dedicated youth advocate and foster care alumni, has over a decade of experience working with at-risk youth. From her own experience, Kelly knows that living in foster care can mean losing important connections to friends, family and the community. Kelly leaves no stone unturned in helping each youth to stay connected. She researches family and previous connections. Most importantly, she encourages each young person to identify the connections they consider important. Kelly makes sure that when youth leave foster care they know

who they can count on for support. Whether it is taking a youth to church, going to dinner, shopping or conducting a mock interview outside of “regular” case activities, Kelly shows amazing patience. Kelly’s work with youth is unmatched by anyone in this field. What makes her amazing is that she utilizes this same patience and expertise with her family, friends and



Bridget Virdure

Youth In Need

“Bridget is a top-notch case manager and is an awesome example of excellence.”

Bridget is willing to handle intakes at any time of the day or night. She wants to be involved in after-hours crises to see that things are right. Going the extra mile is the norm for Bridget Virdure. Bridget brings a unique passion to help youth and families succeed. She works with a high number of older youth and is extremely successful in building relationships with them. As a youth, Bridget was able to utilize the Epworth Transitional Living Program, which allowed her to get through some tough times and focus on her college education and independ-



ence. Now a successful adult, Bridget works hard to assure that the youth she works with experience that same success. She connects with youth, teaches them, advocates for them and supports them. Bridget is a top-notch case manager and is an awesome example of excellence.

Kenya Willis

Missouri Children’s Division

“Kenya has soared beyond belief.”

You only have to sit in a meeting with Kenya once to know that she has a special spark of life! For the past 9 years, Kenya has taken on a variety of challenges at the Children’s Division, and her supervisor states she has soared beyond belief in her current position. Respected by her fellow Children’s Division workers, as well as by private agency staff, Kenya has it all: skills, expertise, leadership and personality. She forms alliances and inspires her staff to go the extra mile. Kenya always strives to bring out the best in herself and her staff. She juggles many

balls, and has increased productivity and good outcomes for children and families in all of roles. Her fun and engaging personality, as well as her crazy sense of humor, make Kenya a true joy to be around, and a wonderful part of the Children’s Division St. Louis County team.

