

Stepping Up For Kids

2022

7th Annual Awards Luncheon

Friday, October 7th

Norwood Hills Country Club





**Child Protection & Permanency Units (CPPU)
Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit of Missouri Family
Court-Juvenile Division**

920 North Vandeventer Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

Phone: (314) 552-2000
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Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday (Except Holidays)



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honorees! We appreciate all
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**Center for Innovation in
Child Maltreatment Policy,
Research and Training**

Brown School

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Stepping Up for Kids 2022

Program:

Prelude Music	Point of View Jazz Ensemble, HEAL Center for the Arts Harvey Lockhart, Director
Call to Order and Welcome (11:45 AM)	Yolanda West PACT-STL Director
Lunch	
Welcome and Introduction of Emcee (12:15 PM)	Yolanda West
Recognition of Sponsors & Special Guests	Cynthia Williams, MSW, LCSW, ACSW Washington University Brown School of Social Work
Musical Interlude	Point of View Jazz Ensemble, HEAL Center for the Arts
Guest Speaker	Bethany Johnson-Javois, MSW President & CEO of Deaconess Foundation
Presentation of Stepping Up for Kids Awards	Cynthia Williams
Closing Comments	Cynthia Williams
Recessional Music	Point of View Jazz Ensemble, HEAL Center for the Arts

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Congratulations to the 2022 Stepping Up for Kids nominees!

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home state health.

Home State Health is a Managed Care Organization that serves the needs of Missourians through a range of health insurance solutions.

Under MO HealthNet, Home State serves multiple programs including Children's Health Insurance (CHIP) members and the state's Medicaid expansion population, across all regions of Missouri.

Home State was also recently named the sole provider of the foster care program—Show Me Healthy Kids.

Home State also focuses on under-insured and uninsured individuals through its federal insurance marketplace plan, Ambetter.

Additionally, Home State provides insurance for the Medicare population through a Medicare Advantage plan, WellCare.

Home State Health exists to improve the health of its members through focused, compassionate, and coordinated care.

Stepping Up for Kids 2022

Guest Speaker

Bethany Johnson Javois, MSW

President & CEO of Deaconess Foundation

Rev. Bethany Johnson-Javois, MSW (she/her) is a health and racial justice advocate dedicated to the advancement of child well-being in St. Louis. She is President & CEO of Deaconess Foundation, a board member of Missouri Foundation for Health, a Commissioner, St. Louis Regional Health Commission, former chair of the board of Alive and Well Communities, LLC, and former CEO of the St. Louis Integrated Health Network (IHN).



Born and raised in University City, she returned to Deaconess Foundation as President & CEO after having formerly served on the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Devoted to the Deaconess mission and guided by faith, Bethany leads the Foundation in its continued pursuit of the improved health of the Metropolitan St. Louis and Southern Illinois communities and its people through philanthropy, advocacy, and organizing for racial equity and policy change.

Emcee

Cynthia D. Williams, MSW, LCSW, ACSW

Washington University Brown School

As the oldest of five children in a family that was among the first to racially integrate University City, Cynthia D. Williams has made it her personal mission to empower those who feel marginalized or powerless to find their voice.



Since graduating with her master's degree from Washington University in St. Louis, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Cynthia has served as an integral member of the school for over 40 years. Currently assistant dean for community partnerships, she is well known for her patience, intelligence, and ability to find solutions that unify people while respecting individual and community voices.

Cynthia also served for approximately 15 years as a foster parent to children whose behavioral issues impeded adoption. She has taken an active role in developing coursework and providing training to assist birth and foster families during the reunification and adoption process, and to support other foster families in navigating the challenges of caring for displaced and high-risk children.

Thank You Honorees!

You are making a difference in the lives of children and families. We are forever grateful for you!



VCR promotes the well-being of children, youth, and their families, with a primary focus on those impacted by socioeconomic risk and racial inequity.

We do this by:

- **Informing** the community with data and research,
- Promoting **collaborative** action,
- **Engaging** and supporting families, and
- **Advocating** for child well-being through policy and community investment.

HONOREE

Rich Patton Champion for Children Award

Ruth Ehresman

Nominated by Sanaria Sulaiman

"For as long as I have known her, I have never once seen Ruth shy away from a challenge"

Ruth Ehresman started as a board member of Vision for Children at Risk about a decade ago. It was apparent from the beginning that she was an advocate at heart. Her enthusiasm and thoughtfulness radiated through each board meeting, and I could tell that she had devoted her life to caring for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Ruth cared so much about the work that VCR was doing that she ended up joining the VCR team in 2013. Her commitment and passion to promote child well-being was inspirational. Ruth coordinated and facilitated the St. Louis Family & Community Partnership, which later became the St. Louis Child Abuse & Neglect Network (STLCANN), acting as a mediator in the merger with the St. Louis Area Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (COCAN). In addition, each year Ruth organized and led the VCR's Stepping Up for Children's Awards Luncheon, which celebrates the amazing stories of families and front-line agency staff who give outstanding service to children in foster and adoptive care.

From representing our organization in both our collaborative and community engagement focus areas, Ruth shifted into the role of Advocacy Coordinator for VCR. She has helped educate and empower our parents and community members as advocates for their communities. Ruth also collaborated with local and statewide groups to advocate through an equity lens for increased investment in children and families.

She does what it takes to advocate for the children of St. Louis on both the local and state level, going above and beyond with her time and her energy. Her heart is overflowing with compassion for all people. On her days off, you can find Ruth at her local church helping to serve meals, stocking the food pantry, and just talking to people to make them feel heard and seen. The way she treats everyone with respect and kindness is heartwarming. She sees everyone as an equal human being, regardless of ethnicity or race or color, and she is a vocal ally when you need one most. She is someone that I trust and count on as a friend and a colleague. She's the kind of person I could call on to support the organization with matters that involve protecting the well-being of our children and the community.



*Congratulations
Stepping Up for Kids
Honorees!*

*We appreciate all that you do
to serve children and families.*



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We extend our heartfelt thanks to the foster, kinship, guardian and relative families for their tireless supply of love and nurturing to vulnerable children.

CPP congratulates and is proud of the hard work of all Stepping Up for Kids award recipients. Thanks also for the diligent and extremely hard work being done by all of the CPP staff to ensure the health and safety of children and youth entrusted to their care.

Thank you all!!!



Epworth Children & Family Services
FamilyForward
Youth In Need
Together we make a difference!

CPP is a consortium of social services agencies working together to provide foster care case management, adoption, guardianship, and resource development services in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County and Jefferson County.

Member Agencies:

Epworth Children and Family Services
FamilyForward
Youth In Need

HONOREE

Rich Patton Champion for Children Award

Brenda Maly

Nominated by Children's Permanency Partnership (CPP)

Everyone in this room knows that you don't go into Social Services to make a lot of money, fame or paparazzi - people come to the field to make a difference to the clients that they serve, to teach them that they can accomplish their goals and become whoever they want to be in this world. This is what Brenda Maly did. She spent the last 14 years leading CPP and pushing for systemic changes in the Child Welfare.



Through her guidance, leadership, and a whole lot of teamwork, CPP has impacted over 13,000 youth and their families and over 3,100 youth have reached permanency. That is over 3,100 kids in safe, stable, and loving, long-term homes. Through Brenda's leadership, youth have found safety and a home with countless foster and kinship families—and those families found support in CPP.

In the ever-evolving world of child welfare, Brenda's direction and commitment have focused on innovative solutions and services to help youth and their families thrive. CPP has lead the way and expanded to offer case management, licensing, TFC, and support programs.

At times, for Brenda, making a difference also meant teaching her staff how to work together in a group or - yes - even a team to support the needs of the clients and each other. Sometimes the hardest part about being a leader is just getting the staff involved and interested in learning. Brenda Maly never had that problem.

Brenda showed that you can make a difference in someone's life by the day to day things you do for them. Those small things work together to make a big difference in the lives of others. Brenda was always available to help her staff, clients, or peers be successful. Even at the end of a long day, she would volunteer her time to make herself available to meet with staff who needed extra help. Brenda has been an amazing Leader, but she is also a great colleague and friend. If you were ever at work late and needed someone to help you brainstorm problem solving ideas, Brenda was there.

She has been our "go-to" person when we have had questions or needed ideas. Heck, after 14 years of Foster Care you have so much knowledge to share! Thank you for always being willing to share! Your drive and dedication built a solid foundation for CPP and continued their growth. So, Brenda, I want to offer a sincere Thank You---for all that you have done for CPP, youth and families, STLCANN, Stepping up for Kids, and the community.

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*Thank you to our
2022 Planning Committee!*

Mary Mogg
Shante' Lampley, DM
Craig Schmid
Katrina Orlet
Bonnie Washeck
Jennifer Humphrey
Yolanda West

HONOREES

Resource Families

Willie and Lawreene Hall

Resource Family, Nominated by Thyra Jones

Mr. and Mrs. Hall have fostered approximately 42 children during their 8-year career and found their niche with boys ages 4-16. They learned that there seems to be a greater placement need for males, especially teen males. Within the past 3 years, the Halls moved into an Angels' Arms Home so that they could have more room for children in need. They not only have a heart of gold, but they possess patience too. Children usually have a history of frequent disruptions, until they were placed with the Hall family! Mrs. Hall makes hard-bound life books for children placed in the home to capture their memories. Mrs. Hall has her own business and can flex her time so that she can devote herself to the boys. Pure Dedication!



Willie and Lawreene Hall loves to take vacations with their boys. They have traveled to Branson, Lake of the Ozarks, Disney World, Texas, Atlanta, GA, Minnesota (Mall of America), and Tampa FL, to name a few. On one occasion, the Hall family planned a spring break trip to Texas with the boys. Two of the boys were unable to get clearance for them to travel out of state, especially to a state that didn't have a mask mandate. Because Mr. and Mrs. Hall did not want to leave these two behind, they cancelled their Texas' trip and found a resort in Branson, Missouri so the boys could join. This was their first time on vacation with their foster family. Then in the summer of 2021, when things had changed a little regarding COVID, the Halls were able to take these boys to Texas for the first time! This is just one example that causes Willie and Lawreene Hall to stand out as quality foster parents who "Step up for Kids!"

Dorrie and Reggie Harris

Resource Family, Nominated by Laurie Clark-Huber

Mrs. and Mr. Harris have opened their home to numerous youths throughout their years of fostering. The Harris home is no stranger to new challenges or new experiences. They have opened their home to children who have experience different types and levels of trauma and behaviors. They are always eager to learn new techniques and strategies to help the children learn how to cope with their trauma while maintaining stability within the community. Dorrie and Reggie help youth stay connected with their biological family by helping with transportation to visits, supervising visits, phone calls and other means of staying connected.



Dorrie and Reggie work closely with biological families in ensuring the youth maintain that connection. For instance, they recently worked with a youth and his grandmother. Dorrie and the grandmother would talk on a regular basis about how the youth is doing and the different techniques that are useful when the youth is displaying behaviors. Dorrie and grandmother have created this connection where if the grandmother is not able to handle the youth while he visits, then Dorrie picks him up. Dorrie will continue to provide support to the grandmother while the youth is placed with her. This is to ensure that the grandmother can understand the youth's trauma and know how to connect with them even when he is challenging her. They also make themselves available to take emergency placements at the last minute.

HONOREES

Resource Family & Frontline Staff

Kelly Leonhardt and Eric Cotton

Resource Family, Nominated by Elisabeth Eisenhauer

Eric and Kelly have been fostering for three years and currently have placement of six children. They are amazing humans, and fiercely love every child that walks through their door. They have had happy and sad goodbyes, but they never let their heartbreak stop them from saying yes to a new or returning child in need. They support biological parents, family, siblings, and caseworkers too. Not only do they make sure their needs are taken care of; they also ensure every child in their home is engaged in extracurricular activities to including, baseball, soccer, swimming lessons, etc. Eric and Kelly say yes to the kids everyone say no to.



In November of 2021 a child in Kelly and Eric's home was hospitalized and had to be intubated due to having a seizure. Following that hospitalization, the child was diagnosed with epilepsy. His medical needs became so great that Kelly made the tough decision to quit her job to work on getting the child's seizures under control. Kelly and Chris worked closely with doctors and specialist and because of this, the child has not had a seizure since his hospitalization. Kelly has advocated for visit supervisors to be trained on how to administer survival medication to the child if needed and found a nurse who was willing to supervisor the visits so the child's needs can be best met. Kelly has also offered to train the child's parents on how to properly administrator survival medication as well.

Barb Johnson

Children's Division Supervisor, Nominated by Beth Stonefield

Barb has dedicated her life to serving children and families. She has been employed at Children's Division for over 30 years with half of that being a hotline investigator. As a frontline worker, Barb took extra time with her families to ensure they understood the process and their rights. She was instrumental in developing local protocols to ensure families received high quality services. She actively listens to children and families to help them find solutions. As a supervisor, Barb is invested in helping new CD employees understand the work and is a great mentor. Barb looks for every new employee's passion for work and develops her supervisory style to match what they need. Children's Division has been short staffed for quite some time. To relieve some of the workload that would be placed on her staff, Barb has returned to the field to work hotline reports. She manages these reports and still provides quality supervision to her staff. She also volunteers to take after hours or weekend shifts when needed.



Barb believes in listening to families and helping them find their own solutions. She believes families are their own best experts. She believes that people have the power to change, and children do best when remaining with their families. She models this for her staff and mentors great listening and engagement skills. She is passionate about her work and wants new employees to be compassionate and understanding when working with families. This is how Barb steps up for children and her staff too!

Stepping Up for Kids 2022

HONOREES

Frontline Staff

Margaret Autrey

Deputy Juvenile Officer II, St. Louis City Family Court

Nominated by Yvonne Rivers

Ms. Margaret Autrey has served as a Court Official for 25 years with the last 16 years as a DJO in the Care & Protection Unit. Ms. Autrey has a wealth of experience, knowledge and is a great advocate for children and families but she seems to have a special skill with working with older youth.



Ms. Autrey has built great relationships with the older youth she works with. She takes them out on outings to get better acquainted with them. Ms. Autrey makes sure their voices are heard and their wishes are expressed during court hearings and meetings. Ms. Autrey truly believes that every child in foster care deserves permanency!

In one case, Ms. Autrey fought to find permanency with a natural father and his three children. The children's mother struggled with a substance addiction while there was no contact with their father who lived out town. They both seemed non-compliant, and the case was headed towards adoption and TPR. The father returned to the St. Louis area after the death of his grandmother. He contacted the team and Ms. Autrey encouraged him to attend the next Family Support Team Meeting to regain custody of his children. The youngest child was already being adopted while the other two were headed that way. With the help of Ms. Autrey's advocacy, in a year, the father was able to gain custody of his two older children and adopt his youngest child.

Dawn Blunda

Managing Attorney, Children's Division

Nominated by Kenya Willis

Dawn has provided an invaluable service to the child welfare system to ensure equity and fairness occurs for the families served in the St Louis Region. As the Managing attorney Dawn, often with minimum or transitioning staff, works tirelessly to ensure that child welfare staff are supported in meeting their outcomes that allow for children to remain safe, receive the services need to address their trauma and have an additional voice towards their best interest. Dawn makes herself available for teams when needed and keeps all case managing staff informed of important information related to court involved situations. She is a fierce advocate, superb leader, and an informative coach.



There are so many times that Dawn is performing tasks behind the scenes and often while many others are sleeping to ensure that child welfare staff have information they need. She often does not hesitate to stand up for what is just. She does all this while still being present whether in the court room or during staff meetings to ensure that she is giving her all to support those depending on her.



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Congratulations Honorees!

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Point of View Jazz Ensemble
HEAL Center for the Arts

Music for Stepping Up for Kids is provided by the Point of View Jazz Ensemble from HEAL Center for the Arts.

Founded by Harvey Lockhart, HEAL operates in partnership with local school districts to provide a safe and supportive space where students of urban communities have access to high quality mentoring, tutoring, and arts education. HEAL is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Grand Center.



CHAMPALE ANDERSON- GREENE

FREE LUNCH PROGRAM, FOUNDER

Providing 200 free lunches daily to students in need, neighborhood nourisher Champale Anderson-Greene knows the importance of a good meal and the power of strong community.

Stepping Up for Kids 2022

HONOREES

Community Partner

Champale Anderson-Greene

Nominated by Nathan Ivy

In 2014, Champale Anderson of St. Louis, Missouri noticed that her kids' friends were always hungry when they came over to her house after school. After learning that many of their families didn't have the means to provide them with more than one meal per day, Champale, a mother of six, was heartbroken. It got her thinking: were there other children in her neighborhood who were going hungry, too?

That's when Champale had an idea. Since she lived so close to a school bus stop, she realized that she could help hungry kids in her neighborhood by giving them bagged lunches and snacks as they got off the bus after school. Champale quickly got to work, using her own money to buy and prepare enough sandwiches and snack supplies for 100 lunches. Within minutes after the children's arrival, all 100 of the lunch bags were gone. It was clear that there was, in fact, a huge need for her lunches, and after seeing the smiles they brought to the children's faces, Champale knew that she had found her calling.

Every school day since then, Champale has given out bagged lunches and snacks to hundreds of kids in her neighborhood. Her initiative, which she now calls Champ's Teardrops, is a vital part of her community – especially for those families who struggle to make ends meet. Champale is widely revered as a local hero, providing endless love, warmth, and generosity to the kids in her neighborhood who need it most.



Laura Storm

Nominated by Mary Mogg

Laura is the creator of the not for profit Foster Together. Foster Together provides support to the foster community with free resources including clothing. The boutique is located in Arnold (Jefferson County) but Laura knows NO boundaries. She will provide what is needed to any foster/relative caregiver in the state. She now has volunteers who man the store and volunteers who will drive items to providers ANYWHERE in the state.



She received a Safe Seats grant to provide car seats for new kids in foster care. She knows that when asked to take a child, a provider (foster or relative) often does not have time to get the essentials. She will order a car seat for the child at Target and have it ready for pick up for the provider. This program is so popular, the grant funding for the year was used up the first six months. But that didn't stop Laura. She put a request on social media and received additional funds. Monetary donations are still needed! The car seat follows the child. Laura does not care where the provider lives or the time of day. She will make sure they get what they need to care for the children. Laura also hosts Exploring Fostering at the boutique for folks to gain more information on foster parenting.

Laura has worked tirelessly for the past 5 years to support foster families and ensure they have what is needed to care for our children. She is kind, compassionate and always willing to help.

Thank you.

Stepping Up for Kids 2022