



**County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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PRESS RELEASE

**LA County Social Workers Receive Prestigious Cornelia Funke Awards
at Inaugural Awards Presentation Ceremony.**

(LOS ANGELES, August 4, 2014) — On August 7th, at 11:30 a.m., at the LAC+USC Medical Center, LA County Board Supervisor Gloria Molina and world-renowned author Cornelia Funke will present awards to five social workers from the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for their outstanding work with children and families. Funke has personally financed these awards worth \$5,000 each.

Cornelia Funke is a multiple-award winning children's author best known for her books "Dragonrider," "Thief Lord" and "Inkheart," which was made into a major motion picture. Cornelia grew up in Germany and after graduating college worked as a children's social worker in Hamburg, Germany. She also sits on the Board of Directors for the Los Angeles County Violence Intervention Program and dedicates herself to helping abused and neglected children. Her compassion, unyielding generosity, and support of those committed to the safety and well-being of Los Angeles County's children has led her to create this award.

"I want to show my gratitude with this award to all the men and women in this city who walk into the darkness for us. I want to show my respect to all the ones who fearlessly face the shadows of our society and reach out for the weakest - the children who learned about fear and pain far too early and live lives that would break most of us. The winners of these awards devote their life to bringing light into their darkness. They made it their job to heal the wounds others caused, to bring joy where there was just pain, support and love to children who never experienced either. There is no nobler task in our society, and none is harder. I wish I could do more and I hope there will be others who make this work more bearable by showing the social workers of LA that we all know what we owe them."

Led by Dr. Astrid Heger, the Violence Intervention Program has served as the primary hub for all child abuse cases in Los Angeles County, establishing a multidisciplinary family advocacy

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

center that provides medical, forensic, mental health, advocacy and supportive services to victims of child abuse, neglect, sexual assault, domestic violence, elder abuse and dependent adult abuse.

Social workers profiled below will be available for interviews before and after the reception. If you plan to cover the event, please contact Neil Zanville or Dominique Robinson with the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at (213) 351-5886.

Anne Thomas

Anne Thomas has served DCFS for over twenty years. In one case, Anne saved three children from a dangerous home where children were exposed to sexual exploitation and narcotic abuse. Anne successfully navigated extremely difficult circumstances, resulting in the children being placed in a safe home.

Araceli Guerrero-Monge

In a recent case, Araceli Guerrero-Monge worked alongside law enforcement, medical personnel, the Coroner's Office and other agencies to discover a long history of severe abuse in a family. Araceli's work resulted in the children being placed into a loving and nurturing family.

Agavni Nalbandyan

Agavni Nalbandyan walked into a home to conduct a child abuse investigation and found a family being held captive in their home by a father. Agavni secured a safe exit for the family and stayed with them until their long-term safety was assured.

Laurie Miller

Laurie Miller's dedication and investigative work resulted in finding a missing baby that was abused and neglected and would most certainly not have survived without her intervention.

Fawnda Sandoval

Fawnda Sandoval, an adoption social worker of almost 25 years, is committed to finding adoptions for teenagers, young adults, and medically fragile youth. Since November 2011, she has been instrumental in finding adoptive homes for 25 teens and youth, most of which had multiple previous foster homes. Fawnda helped them not only to find permanent, loving homes, but to find hope as well.

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