

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

2007 – A Year for Implementation

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to say how honored I am to serve as your new Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.

As many of you know, I have grown up in this department and, like many of you, have devoted my career to helping children and families in need. Now I look forward to leading us into this next exciting phase in our history – from planning and establishing to implementing and expanding our key initiatives and strategies, many of them funded by the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, and building on the success we have achieved so far.

In the past year, DCFS surpassed many of its goals. As of September 2006, the department reduced by 46 percent the 13,409 children who were in long-term foster care in June 2005. The number of children reunified within 12 months of placement increased from 48 percent to 64 percent while we maintained a low recidivism rate of 4.6 percent. In addition, the department increased the percentage of youth adopted within 24 months of placement from 14 percent to 20 percent.

As you will read in this issue of “DCFS News,” we had a lot to be proud of in 2006. The department received awards on the national and local levels for a variety of programs aimed at keeping children safer, helping families and increasing permanency for youth. As DCFS staff, you should all be proud of this recognition. It is a direct result of the outstanding job you do each day.

As we continue to build on this success and move into the waiver implementation phase, some organizational changes are underway. The structural shifts in management alignment are designed to support the allocation of additional staff and resources that will further enhance and strengthen our direct services to children and families. In addition, this shift will blend and broaden these critical services, allowing staff to work even more efficiently together on achieving our outcomes.

I am excited to move ahead with the work to be done throughout the next year, specifically developing and expanding the initiatives that will help children stay safe, keep families together and provide stability and permanency for all youth in care.

Congratulations again on the excellent work done in 2006. I believe, working together, we are in the process of establishing ourselves as a premier child welfare agency. I appreciate your hard work, creativity and innovation and look forward to your continued dedication and commitment as we move forward. ■

Patricia S. Ploehn, LCSW,
Director

Five-Year Plan Drafted for Waiver Project

The Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project Waiver was approved in March and during the past several months the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has moved forward with planning for the use of the waiver funding.

Beginning in 2007 and continuing for five years, flexible funding will assist in further developing proactive up-front preventative services for children and families. The flexible funding will also help provide additional intensive services to support the timely reunification or an alternative permanency plan for children currently in foster care, and after-care services to prevent disruption and children’s re-entry into care.

The waiver will allow the department to use IV-E funds whether or not a child is removed from the home. It will also allow for the flexibility to use funds to provide direct services not currently funded by IV-E to ensure that children remain safely in their family of origin, are reunified sooner, or an alternative permanency plan is achieved timely.

Throughout the summer, DCFS Deputy Directors, Regional Administrators and Division Chiefs spearheaded waiver meetings in each Service Planning Area throughout the County. The meetings brought together staff from regional offices, community providers, community stakeholders, caregivers, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Children’s Deputies, the Los Angeles County Department of Probation, court and the Los Angeles Commission for Children and Families, among others, to provide input on services needed in their communities to improve outcomes for children and families.

These meetings built on the 2003 efforts that created local advisory groups to engage community stakeholders in a discussion about strategies that would best help the County achieve the desired outcomes for children and families.

“We wanted to take advantage of the planning regional offices had already begun in the community,” explained DCFS Director Patricia Ploehn. “We didn’t want to create a new system, but instead use the successful local planning process underway in communities.”

The information gathered was then fed into four workgroups established in 2004 at the request of the Board of Supervisors and co-led by DCFS and the Commission for Children and Families. The workgroups focus on prevention, reunification, permanency (older youth/court) and permanency (relative and Kinship care).

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DCFS Success Stories

As a regular part of "DCFS News," we recognize the successes of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and its community partners. These success stories are diverse and offer an opportunity for staff and community partners to celebrate accomplishments and share the good work they are doing. To submit story ideas for this section, please e-mail Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.

This season in "Success Stories" we turn the spotlight on ourselves, highlighting the DCFS initiatives that were recognized locally and nationally in 2006.

Department Receives Local, National Awards in 2006

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) received numerous local and national awards in 2006.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) recognized the department with seven 2006 Achievement Awards. Department initiatives honored with awards included the Multi-Agency Response Team, the Joint Referral Response Initiative (J2R), Concurrent Planning Redesign, Point of Engagement, Permanency Partners Program (P3), the D-Rate Program and Residential Wraparound. All were recognized for being innovative programs which contribute to and enhance county government in the United States.

The department also received several Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity awards in October. The Criminal Clearance Tracking System, J2R, the Concurrent Planning Redesign, Shelter Care Web



Director Patricia Ploehn and Regional Administrator Eric Marts admire the POE award.

Application and Probation Permanency Planning were all honored with certificates and plaques.

Point of Engagement received a Top 10 Mega Million Platinum Eagle Dollar Award and P3 was recognized for its work finding permanency for children in long-term foster care with a Commissioners' Memorial Award.

This past summer, P3 staff also attended an awards ceremony in Chicago where the initiative was named a National Association of Counties 2006 Achievement Award winner. The award was given to the department in recognition for the establishment of an innovative program that contributes to and enhances county government.

In addition, The United States Department of Health and Human Services honored the department in November for the Concurrent Planning Redesign. DCFS' Permanency Resources Unit received a 2006 Adoption Excellence Award in the category "Decrease in the Length of Time that Children in Foster Care Wait for Adoption." The department was specifically recognized for the extraordinary contributions it has made in providing adoption and other permanency outcomes for children in foster care. ■



Permanency Resources Unit Staff and DCFS Director Patricia Ploehn with the County award for P3.

Five Year Plan Drafted

Continued from Page 1

The workgroups were expanded to include input from Probation, local planning groups, community stakeholders and service delivery staff.

Out of the workgroups came approximately 200 strategies and ideas of how and where to spend the funding. Based on feedback, the 200 were narrowed down to about 20 and then finally to six initiatives the department will begin on immediately once the waiver funding arrives.

The six initiatives include:

- **Expansion of Family Team Decision-Making;**
- **Development and utilization of community-based placements to further recruit homes in the community;**
- **Expansion of Family Preservation Services;**
- **Expansion of Family Finding including expanding the use of technology such as U.S. Search to find family members;**
- **Establishment of up-front mental health, domestic violence and substance abuse assessment system; and**
- **Parent-child visitation enhancements including plans to bring in more staff to serve as trained monitors to assist social workers with visits.**

According to the draft plan, the waiver demonstration project aims to take full advantage of public and private supports for children and families by improving community partnership, improving service delivery and creating new accountability structures.

In August, County Mayor Michael D. Antonovich sponsored a motion directing the Chief Administrative Office to lead the effort in ensuring that all pending issues between DCFS and Probation were addressed in order to develop a sound local plan that would be best for both departments.

The Bureau of Information Services is also looking at technology solutions needed to support the waiver project.

The five-year draft plan will be submitted by both the department and Probation to the Board of Supervisors. The County is currently in discussions with the state regarding their financial allocation to Los Angeles County. Once that has been finalized, the final action plan will be sent to the Board of Supervisors and then on to the state and federal government. Initial implementation in Los Angeles County is expected in early 2007.

For more information about the waiver and the department's progress, check out the Title IV-E Waiver page on the home page of the L.A. Kids website. ■

County Veteran Susan Kerr Joins DCFS as New Chief Deputy Director

On October 16, 2006, Susan Kerr joined DCFS as the department's Chief Deputy Director.

Kerr formerly held the position of Chief Deputy Director with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH). Prior to this position, she was the Director of the Bureau of Administrative Services in the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). In this capacity, she had responsibility for the DPSS' financial management, contracts, human resources, training and facilities management and acquisition operations.

"Susan's strong fiscal and administrative background, as well as her significant knowledge and understanding of our key partner departments, will be critical in supporting our efforts in moving forward with our strategies," said DCFS Director Patricia Ploehn.

Before returning to DPSS in May 2002, Kerr worked in the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) for six years, first as a budget analyst, then as the manager over the Health and Social Services budget analysts in the CAO's Budget and Operations Management Branch.

During her tenure at the CAO, Kerr worked closely with the County's Department of Health Services, DMH, DCFS, Probation and DPSS on a number of initiatives related to improving services to children and families, most notably those for emancipated youth.

Kerr started her County service in 1968 as a social worker in DPSS. During her first 26 years in DPSS, she worked as an eligibility supervisor, appeals hearing specialist, Adult Protective Services program staff, budget analyst and budget supervisor.

One of her major accomplishments in that period was implementation of the County's Elder Abuse Hotline and a Countywide public education and awareness campaign on elder abuse.

Kerr is a graduate of UCLA with a bachelor's degree in International Relations. ■

Core Issues Identified by County, State and the Children and Family Services Review that the Waiver Project will Address:

- **Increased child safety.**
- **Improvement in timelines to permanency.**
- **Improvement in child and family well-being.**
- **Improvement in the array of services and engagement of families with a more individualized approach to serving children and families.**

SPA SPOTS



Long-time foster parent Marjorie Porter (center) receives an award of appreciation.

In every issue, "DCFS News" provides information about what's happening in the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Service Planning Areas (SPAs). If you have SPA news to report, please submit your ideas to Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.

"All for the Love of Kids"

More than \$45,000 was raised for the department's Family and Children's Trust Fund at the 11th Annual "All for the Love of Kids" fundraising event in August sponsored by L.A. County Mayor Michael Antonovich. These funds support one-time only needs of foster youth that cannot be covered by any other funding source.

The rooftop of Alhambra's Edward's Renaissance 14 Cinema's was filled with over 250 people busy mingling, placing auction bids and enjoying the wonderful buffet dinner.

Entertainment was provided by the department's own Aris Banico on the piano and Andrea Palm. KTLA TV Anchor Michaela Periera served as MC.

This year's "All for the Love of Kids" event included a 2006 KIA Spectra 5 donated by Glendale KIA for a raffle. The car raffle alone raised over \$14,000. What was even more special was that the DCFS Command Post Morale Committee won the raffle.

Command Post Regional Administrator Jennifer Lopez said the win helped further boost the morale of staff. Command Post staff sold the car on ebay for \$11,000 and plan to put the money back into the Morale Committee fund and sponsor their annual Christmas party. They also plan to donate some money to the Trust Fund. ■

DCFS Partners with Azusa Pacific University to Reach Out to Faith-Based Community

DCFS and Azusa Pacific University joined together to kick-off the largest faith-based community partnership in Los Angeles County. Over 300 local religious leaders of all faiths came together in September at the university.

The purpose of the partnership is to reach out to the faith-based community to help find secure, loving foster and adoptive homes for many foster youth. The critical need for mentors was also addressed at the event.

"There are a number of opportunities to educate the community about the fostering, adoptive and mentoring needs of DCFS children," said Glendora DCFS Regional Administrator Rex White.

The kick-off luncheon will be followed by seven, more intensive, follow-up meetings throughout the east San Gabriel Valley in the near future. They are more focused on what individual denominations can

do to motivate their own congregations.

"Our goal is to develop at least 70 foster/adoptive homes within the year through all these groups," explains White. ■

Appreciation of Foster Parent Marjorie Porter

At 85 years old, foster parent Marjorie Porter has not slowed down, nor does she have any intention of doing so. This summer, an appreciation ceremony was held by the DCFS Service Bureau 1 Administration Team to honor Porter for being remarkable caregiver.

Porter was recognized for her dedication and service of caring for more than 100 children during the last 50 years. She was presented with a plaque, reception and a framed picture.

Porter has also become a legal guardian and an adoptive parent to a number of her foster children. During this time, she and her late husband became legal guardians to four children and adopted four others. Her first adopted child is now 52 years old.

Currently, the youngest child in her care is about 18 months old and the oldest is a blind, deaf, wheelchair-bound, mentally-challenged 25-year-old who she has cared for since he was four days old. Many of these children still call her house "home," even though they have reunified with their families or left the system.

Porter also continues to be very active in her community. She shares her experience and leadership skills by serving as President of the Long Beach Foster Parent Association of which she was an original founder. In addition, Porter is active with the L.A. Council Resource Families Coordinating Council.

Porter goes above and beyond to care for her foster children. In her care, children have taken numerous vacations and she has purchased yearly passes to Disneyland and paid \$400 dollars for a prom dress for one child. Porter purchased a van for a young man while providing the environment and financial wisdom so he was able to save more than \$10,000 while employed part-time, in just two years. ■

Santa Clarita's Meet & Greet

The DCFS Santa Clarita office held a meet and greet event this year to celebrate the office's first full year of operation as a DCFS region. When the new Santa Clarita office opened in July 2005 the office covered 16 zip codes. In November, 2005 an additional six zip codes from the west San Fernando Valley were incorporated into their service



The Belvedere Office holds a community event to recruit resource parents.

area. This past March, additional zip codes were added to the Santa Clarita catchment area resulting in the office assuming the major responsibility for the West San Fernando Valley.

The newly formed Santa Clarita/West San Fernando Valley Region office now spans 36 zip codes, from Castaic in the north to Westlake Village on the far western boundary between Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

The event offered everyone a chance to get better acquainted and to begin the process of enhanced services to families throughout our very diverse array of communities.

Within this diversity, there are excellent partners representing highly developed and dedicated programs or agencies. Many of them are major providers including Family Preservation, Wrap-around, educational programs, clinical agencies, group home and foster family agencies, foster parent associations, service clubs and faith-based groups.

About 200 people participated in the event including DCFS staff, resource parents, relative caregivers and community partners from both the Santa Clarita Valley and West San Fernando Valley community. The event was very informal, so DCFS staff interacted directly with community service providers. ■

Belvedere's Quiet Cannon Event

A major goal of the Belvedere Office's Resource Family and Community Partner event this summer was to recruit more resource parents in the Belvedere service area. The Belvedere Office provides services to a total of 1,313 children in out-of-home placement.

The majority of these children (711) reside in relative care, followed by 441 in foster family agency homes. There are also 74 children residing in county foster family homes and 45 youth in group homes. With only 77 foster homes in the Belvedere service area, the office is forced to make placement in other cities and counties.

The "Communities Supporting Families: Coming Together Today, For Our Children's Tomorrow" was held to not only address this critical issue, but also to train and support the current caregivers and strengthen the relationship between resource families and community partners. Each invited caregiver was encouraged to bring one guest to the event who could become a potential resource parent.

In addition, since October 2005, the Belvedere Office has had a Parent Advisory Group. The group has identified various strategies for supporting resource families. This group allows the resource parents to have a place to voice opinions and concerns, and tell DCFS how we can better support them. The first step is to bring resource families together to meet one another.

The department offered training on DCFS initiatives including Concurrent Planning, P3, Family to Family, Structured Decision-Making and Point of Engagement while emphasizing its three key outcomes.

The resource fair allowed resource families to meet local community partners and gather information.

The keynote speaker was the stimulating Jerry Tello and the Sacred Circle provided a unique, interactive and culturally based presentation on "Guiding and Caring for Children in Harmony with Others."

In appreciation, resource parents at the event received a certificate for their commitment to the children under the care of DCFS. ■

Multi-Agency Response Team Recognized Nationally

The Multi-Agency Response Team (MART) continues to gain greater admiration within the law enforcement community, community providers and with local, state and federal elected officials and their representatives.

The MART Team provides emergency protective services to identified children at the time of home raids, probation/parole sweeps and during the course of sensitive investigations by law enforcement such as homicide, child pornography rings, terrorism and mostly clandestine drug labs.

At the current time, the program has 12 investigators under three supervisors. In the next few months, the goal is have the team expand to 24 specially trained Children's Social Work Investigators who will co-locate throughout Los Angeles County in offices with city, county, state and federal specialized law enforcement task forces.

This will enable DCFS to work closer with law enforcement agencies on all levels and to increase child safety. Eventually, the expansion goal is to have a minimum of one MART Team in each of the five Los Angeles County Supervisorial Districts.

MART's reputation has also grown as the team has made presentations throughout California and the United States. The program has received awards from Los Angeles County and two national awards.

The National Institute of Drug Abuse has given the program and the UCLA-Integrated Substance Abuse Program a grant to study children rescued from clandestine drug laboratories in Los Angeles County. This study will provide data about the children including their long-term medical issues, psychosocial and developmental effects resulting from toxic chemical exposure and permanency issues that effect these rescued children. The results of this study will support the promotion of MART as best practice in this specialized area of social work. ■



ROLLING OUT OUR PROGRAMS

Concurrent Planning Redesign Moves Forward

The Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR) continues to roll out throughout DCFS. Since March 2005, 11 offices have implemented the new protocols. The remaining offices, Century, Metro North, Wateridge, Torrance, Santa Fe Springs and Specialized Programs are scheduled to roll out by the end of March 2007.

The department's move towards CPR began year ago and was based on the input, planning and advocacy of line staff. With the intent of removing as many barriers to permanency as possible, the redesign has focused on remedying the historical disconnects between policy and practice. The redesign also reinforces the use of paraprofessional and clerical staff for non-social work activities.

Casework activities have shifted from the services Children's Social Worker (CSW) to be shared with the Dependency Investigating (DI) social workers, Terminating Parental Rights (TPR) Team and Adoption CSW. There has also been revitalization in the practice of full disclosure. Forms have been revised including family information gathering forms and Concurrent Planning Assessment in an effort to reduce redundancy and increase relevancy for each CSW.

Recognizing the need for an on-going re-assessment of a new initiative, a joint labor-management collaborative meets regularly. This group is comprised of CSWs, Supervising CSWs, Assistant Regional Administrators (ARAs), clerical staff and union representatives to examine the efficacy of the protocols and discuss modifications. Each CPR office holds monthly meetings to allow for staff feedback.

The redesign has been structured in such a way that each professional, paraprofessional and support staff member involved in a case is allowed to build on and focus on their own expertise while working as a team.

The creation of the TPR Team is an example of teamwork. Delays in TPR due to legal issues have long dragged out adoption cases. These continuances

can now be resolved by the Family Maintenance and Reunification CSW referring the case to the TPR Team 30 days prior to the hearing at which the department will recommend termination of family reunification services.

The Dependency Investigator Assistant member of the TPR team effects notice, including conducting personal service in the field as needed. The DI CSW reviews the case to identify barriers to TPR and then writes the court report along with the material from the Adoption CSW. Other members of the team include a unit clerk, who among other tasks, prints notices and processes transportation requests, a TPR clerk, publication clerk, and Due Diligence clerk. ■

Wraparound Program Expanding

DCFS has expanded its Wraparound program in 2006 to include 35 services providers to help children and families most at risk. All of the community providers are contracted with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH).

In May, the department began with 546 youth in the Wraparound program. By August, 600 youth were enrolled.

"We hope to have more than 800 youth served in 2007," said Division Chief Dr. Michael Rauso, who heads the department's Wraparound program.

"Over the past year, we have worked with the Regional Administrators, DMH, Probation and the community to outreach and educate about Wraparound and the services provided.

"Now we need all social workers to think about kids who are in Level 12 group homes or above, or are at risk. Many of them can and should be referred to the Wrap program."

Rauso said that new providers are coming on board slowly and are in the process of hiring staff specifically to deal with families going through the Wraparound process.

More information about Wraparound can be found in the National Wraparound Initiative and Family Guide posted on L.A. Kids. ■

ON THE LINE

“On the Line” is a “DCFS News” column featuring Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services’ social workers whose achievements and practices epitomize the best in social work.

Permanency is the Goal for Social Worker

Robert Becerril, a Children’s Social Worker I in the Metro North office, routinely goes the extra mile to find permanence for the children on his caseload.

Although he’s been at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for only about 1 ½ years, Becerril has touched dozens of young lives, healed families and helped dozens of children transition safely back home.

Becerril is a graduate of Rio Hondo Community College and California State University, Los Angeles where he received a bachelor’s degree in Rehabilitation Services specializing in counseling.

He got one of his first experiences with children and families when he had an internship at counseling centers doing drug counseling, specifically of mothers who had their children detained by the department because of drug abuse.

“I believe every social worker can be doing this (permanency work) as long as we have support to help us.”

*-Robert Becerril, CSW I,
Metro North Office*

“I learned how to check my personal opinions at the door,” explained Becerril, “and I learned that people could be master manipulators.”

Becerril got more experience serving as a guidance counselor at Basset High School. There, he learned to use discipline to teach young people. “That experience helps me out here. I’m just really straightforward and hard line.”

He took upper division classes in Behavioral Intervention Case Management and eventually got a job at a social service agency called Hub City where he developed youth programs similar to the department’s Independent Living Program. He said he also enjoyed exposing the youth to different options in life.

Becerril said he ended up in social work because he had a friend who was a DCFS social worker and it sounded interesting.

Over his short time at DCFS, he has developed into a social worker who works hard on permanency. Becerril uses the Permanency Partners Program (P3) and Family Finding techniques on a daily basis to reunite children with family members or find them

other permanency such as legal guardianship.

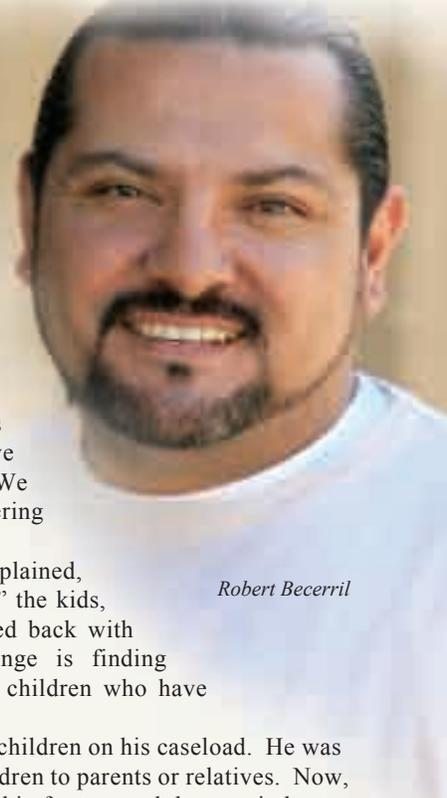
“I believe every social worker can be doing this (permanency work) as long as we have the support to help us. We need to do our research gathering information for these children.”

One of the challenges, he explained, is trying to “de-institutionalize” the kids, especially when they are placed back with their parents. Another challenge is finding service providers to deal with children who have severe behavioral problems.

At one time, Becerril had 31 children on his caseload. He was able to send home 17 of the children to parents or relatives. Now, he’s working on legal guardianship for two and the remainder are in the permanency process.

How does he want to be seen as a social worker? “As a resource for solutions. I’m always learning from my clients. I can teach them and the can teach me.”

“Robert sees each youth on his caseload as an individual and he treats each youth with the same care, concern and respect he would want for his own family,” said Supervising Children’s Social Worker Adrienne Olsen. “He has not wavered in his focus to find permanency for every youth on his caseload. Robert’s perseverance and dedication is saving lives. In my eyes, he is a hero.” ■



Robert Becerril

Robert’s Caseload Stories:

- **Returned a 15-year-old boy to his first foster home, working with them to establish legal guardianship.**
- **Reunited a 14-year-old boy who was in care since age nine, with his mother. Both are bi-polar and intensive services were provided. The boy went through some rough times, and was hospitalized while home with his mom due to issues at school. “His mom had a hard time dealing with him and we had to re-detain and place the child in a D-rate foster home. They are now considering legal guardianship,” said Becerril. “I saw what he was missing – something that resembles a family.”**



Director's Employees of the Month

Every month, DCFS employees are honored as part of the "DCFS All Stars" employee recognition program. All of these employees are honored for enriching the lives of the children and families and contributing to our goals of permanence, safety and reduced reliance on out-of-home care. Recipients are chosen by a rotating panel of all levels of DCFS staff and given special certificates. Photos of all recipients are also mounted on the wall outside of the Director's office at DCFS Headquarters and posted on L.A. Kids. We're still looking for "DCFS All Stars" to honor and all staff are encouraged to send in nominations using the form on the L.A. Kids web site.

For more information, call Lois Shirk in the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at (213) 351-5886. To learn more about these outstanding recipients, check out the Director's Page on L.A. Kids. Congratulations to all of the honorees!

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD FOR JULY:
Allen Withrow, Group Supervisor II, Child Abuse Command Post, for his outstanding contribution to the 1st Annual DCFS Family Fun Day!

Outstanding Administrative Service Staff Award
May: Rita Murgas-Lee, ASM III, Contracts
June: No Nominees
August: No Nominees
September: Marilynne Garrison, CSA III, Point of Engagement/
Multidisciplinary Team

Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award
May: Charlotte Lewis, SCSW, Covina Annex Office
June: Joe Harper, SCSW, El Monte Office
August: Sam Labib, CSW III, Wateridge Office
September: Julia Han, CSW III, Palmdale Office

Outstanding Support Service Staff Award
May: Linda Thomas, Adoption Assistant, Metro North Office
June: Rosemary Rincon, STC, Juvenile Court Services
August: Elisa Camargo, ITC, Lakewood Office
September: Ingrid Rocha, Adoption Assistant, Glendora Office

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UPCOMING EVENTS

THE SECOND ANNUAL DCFS FAMILY FUN DAY IS COMING

Be there or be square on Saturday, July 14, 2007 for the second annual DCFS Family Fun Day. This staff appreciation day will again be held at the Crystal Springs Picnic Area in Griffith Park from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Spread the word. There will be games, prizes, delicious barbecue, raffles and entertainment for the entire family.

All DCFS employees and their families are invited to share in the fun. Come, meet your friends and spend some time together. Keep your eye on L.A. Kids during the following months for more information. If you missed all the fun at the first event, you won't want to be left out in 2007!

CELEBRATION 2007

"Celebration 2007 – Honoring the Academic Achievements of Foster Youth" will honor foster and probation youth for their outstanding scholastic achievement. Each year through Celebration, more than 100 high school

graduates are awarded scholarships to further their pursuits in college, vocational school or the military. This year's event will again be held at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in June.

All Children's Social Workers and Independent Living Coordinators are urged to have youth on their caseloads apply for the many scholarships available. Applicants must have a minimum grade point average of 2.7. They also must be eligible to graduate in 2007 and be starting school in fall of the same year.

"Celebration 2007" is a collaborative effort between the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services; the County of Los Angeles Probation Department; United Friends of the Children (UFC), a non-profit organization that provides direct and in-depth services that make it possible for foster youth to become self-sustaining adults; Community College Foundation; The Teague Family Foundation; and Casey Family Foundation.

Information about "Celebration 2007" will be posted on the L.A. Kids website or call (213) 351-0102. We look forward to seeing more DCFS staff in attendance, cheering on these incredible youth and celebrating their success.