

February 2, 2021

RE: Nominations for the 2021 Dr. Janet E. Williams Humanitarian Award

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great privilege and honor that I nominate my colleague and dear friend, Mrs. Shante Powers-Gaskins out of the Willimantic Area Office. I cannot think of another person whom has demonstrated a stronger passion for children and families, has shown by her unyielding concern and has taken action towards the advancement and betterment of the families that we serve and within the black community.

Shante was born in Harlem NY and was raised in New Jersey. At age 18, she came to CT to study at UConn for her undergraduate and graduate degrees; earning her BA and MSW. I first came to know this vibrant woman through shared employment here at DCF. We started our DCF careers on the same exact day, for the same office, and for the same position. We are Clinical Social Worker Associates for the Willimantic office and started on 9/30/16. Shante and I are both Licensed Clinical Social Workers and are part of the Regional Resource Group.

Shante has led the first ever Office Racial Justice Book Club for Willimantic. Shante has developed and offered a forum during lunch breaks for colleagues to discuss the book and utilize scenarios, quotes, and chapters to bring back to our unit meetings in order to further enrich discussions about our agency's progression towards becoming anti-racist. She has created the book club to be a safe and courageous space, where a foundation of trust has been built regarding all information shared during our discussions, and it will only continue to grow. We also spend some time during Book Club processing this country's and world events as they may pertain to our anti-racist work personally and professionally. She is also well respected among her colleagues and clients and volunteers to assist colleagues on how to apply this work to the families we serve.

Shante has made a lasting impression on me with her perpetual compassion, dedication and strong sense of pride in the work that she puts forth. It is with great confidence that I nominate Mrs. Shante Powers-Gaskins for this award.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Mendes, LCSW