

## Commissioner's Monthly Message



The month of July typically brings with it vacations, time off from work and a slight reduction in new reports of child maltreatment.

This year feels different.

Children and families across Connecticut are experiencing very difficult traumatic events that have left many to grieve the loss of loved ones.

The youngest children in our communities - those under the age of 5 - require collective efforts to empower and support their

parents/caregivers during the less structured days of summer.

We've included a video this month to discuss these issues in more detail → [Commissioner July 2023](#)

In my 30yrs at DCF, I thought I had heard it ALL ... nope.

We regularly lift-up the strength of our staff however, none as brave as the three Wilderness School employees, **Allaith Ghaibah, Ellen Stumph, and Eric Carlson**. Because of their courageous efforts during a bobcat attack while on expedition, the safety of the youth-campers was maintained, and kids were not harmed.



Gratitude is hardly enough.

***Have you seen the new branding???***

**CT FOSTERS: Mobilizing Love - Unifying Families** New logo and Messaging!



KUDOS to the **Foster Care Division** for a fantastic series of presentations at our DCF Leadership Forum. Director Natalia Liriano's team developed an agenda that reinforced the **QPi principle** of ensuring every child receives excellent parenting every single day while in the custody of the Department.

Thank You also to our Functional Family Therapy (FFT) partners and agency clinicians from CCP, Klingberg FC, The Village and Wheeler Clinic for a very enlightening panel discussion on the evolution of our therapeutic foster care model.

Keynote speaker, **Brandy Hudson** of the Youth Law Center referenced the single most influential factor contributing to stability of children in foster care is the relationships between the child welfare agency and the caregiver. Reflecting on her own lived expertise which included **32**

placements, urged attendees to work collaboratively across divisions for the sake of children we serve.

←A special thanks to members of our **Caregiver Advisory Council** → for their impassioned CALL TO ACTION! Caregivers deserve respect, communication, and consideration of their time as an equal team member.

**Foster Care Appreciation activities are in full SWING!**

Take a look at a few photos from Region 4's foster family sunny



afternoon at the ballpark:



Read in this month's "*Spotlight on What's Right*" newsletter the story of **Jackson**, a three-year-old boy reunified with his mother, **Amy**. She credits foster mother, **Michelle Gonzalez**, for teaching her "how to

be a mother," and never giving up on her. "I thank DCF for placing my son with her. Without [DCF], I never would have met her," Amy stated.

We also tell Michelle's story. "I am going to make a difference," she remembers thinking about when she finally decided to become licensed. Over the past 7 years, Michelle has developed a relationship with each family of the children placed into her home. "I make it known from the first icebreaker that I am not here to replace them," is how Michelle wants the family to understand her role.

Our practice continues to evolve.

The Executive Team and I have received recommendations from the *Post Consent Decree Workgroups*- Intake, Visitation, Case Plans and Caseload Weighting - to ensure our practice reflects the needs of Connecticut's children and families in 2023. Stay tuned for more information!



Lastly, the **Deer Oaks** EAP program has recently started an **EAP for first Responders**. This is a confidential, 24/7 helpline staffed by Master's Level Clinicians with in-the-moment telephonic support and crisis intervention available.

This program can be accessed by calling **1-833-253-1129**. When contacting them, please make sure to identify yourself as a calling from the Department of Children and Families.

**Stay safe --- Stay strong --- Support Each Other!**