

A Message from Commissioner Dorantes

## Early detection saves lives.

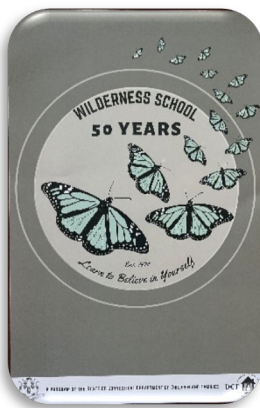


While the month of October signifies many themes, for me personally, there is none greater than Breast Cancer Awareness. My fight with cancer began approximately 9 months after my appointment as DCF's Commissioner. According to the American Cancer Society, in 2022 Black women still have a 4% lower *incidence* rate of breast cancer than White women but a **40% higher breast cancer death rate**. October amplifies the early detection message as a firm reminder to you, family members, friends, and colleagues to not take your health for granted. Wearing pink honors survivors and those battling this disease .... However, wearing pink doesn't address breast cancer - **early detection does.**

**Congratulations** are in order!!! **Kris Robles, Alison Karimi and Dr. Polly Marston** were honored by the **Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)** at the "First 100 Plus Breakfast and Awards Ceremony." The event honored 100 individuals who are leading efforts across the state to improve outcomes for survivors of intimate partner violence, their children, and communities. In this month's "Spotlight on What's Right," the trio provides additional insights into supportive resources.



In our small state alone, Connecticut has had an average of **14** IPV-related **deaths every year** since **2000**. If you need help or just someone to talk to, please visit [CTSAFEConnect.org](https://CTSAFEConnect.org) or call or text or chat **(888) 774-2900**. Advocates are available 24/7. Consider the children exposed and families impacted...**THERE'S HELP!**



## Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Wilderness School!

Founded in 1974 as a prevention, intervention, and transition program for CT adolescents, the program model is rooted in positive youth development. **Congratulations** to Director **Aaron Wiebe** and the dedicated full-time and seasonal staff who have served thousands



of young people over the decades. This month's *Spotlight* shares more about the Wilderness School and how current and past participants describe the impact the programs have had on their lives.

**Eric Carlson, Allaith Ghaibah, and Ellen Stumph** are three of the Wilderness School's seasonal staff. Read how they were attacked by a bobcat during an off-site expedition yet courageously maintained the safety of all of the youth in their charge. "Looking at it now, I think it's a testament to the power of the human spirit and the overall importance of working together collaboratively," Eric stated.



## "Maria Chose to Blossom"

Maria, a Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) was recently selected by the Annie E. Casey Foundation for the **2023 Cohort of Jim Casey Fellows!**

A remarkably strong young woman, Maria describes her journey within the system, an incredible relationship with Social Worker **Gina Cluff**, and her future advocacy plans!



**Yvette Seda**, Social Worker in the Milford Office, was awarded the **2023 William Rivera**

**Humanitarian Award!!!!** *"Being an advocate and educator is a part of who Yvette is and that is evident every day in her interactions with the families she serves," stated her supervisor Jacquelyn Diggs.* She received this recognition during the Central Office **Hispanic and Latino (a,e) Heritage Month** program. This celebration of culture and pride spans September 15<sup>th</sup> through October 15<sup>th</sup> annually.



## ***Empowering the Next Generation***

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of attending the Shiloh Baptist Church Prison Ministry's **Annual**



**Community Awareness and Prevention forum** held at Mitchell College. It was a pleasure to join State Representative Anthony Nolan, New London Mayor Mike Passero, Attorney Lonnie Braxton and DCF Supervisor **Winston Taylor**. We were all empowered to use our collective voices to support young people and their mental health through civic activism.

Last but certainly not least, a multidisciplinary group of child welfare professionals from the state of **California** visited CT DCF to understand more about our Careline, Differential Response System, Prevention Framework and Behavioral Health System along with many other aspects of our work. Kudos to Director **Lisa Daymonde** who coordinated it all with the support of Casey Family Programs. The trip from the California delegation included visits to **Wheeler Clinic** and **The Village for Families and Children** to see some of our contracted service providers in action. **Many Many Thanks** to our partners for providing a glimpse into the intentional collaboration we have on behalf of CT's kids and families.



**Keep up the great work everyone!**