

A Message from Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly

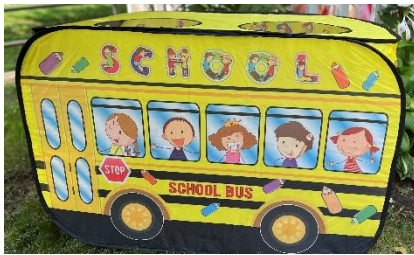


August is winding down which means the end of summer vacations and..... back to school!

To those parents, guardians and caretakers in our DCF family who may be experiencing a kindergartener attending the first day of school up through nervously watching your child enter a college campus - good luck and we are here to support you!

Thank you to our licensed foster and kinship caregivers for all they give to our children as they start a new school year!

Best of luck to **Educational Professionals** across the state as they prepare for a challenging year ahead!



We are grateful for our relationships with **CT State Department of Education Commissioner Charlene M. Russell -Tucker**, and local **Superintendents**. We are so proud of the **DCF USD II staff**



and the **DCF JJ Education Oversight Division** for the impact they have on children's lives.

The **post-secondary education journey** for youth in care can be difficult. National statistics show that only 3-7% of youth in foster care across the country will graduate from college as compared to 30% of all Americans.



Connecticut is fortunate to have **Sun Scholars Inc.** a non-profit organization supporting youth in our colleges and universities who experienced foster care, adoption and transfers of guardianship. Through academic coaching, peer mentoring and resource coordination, they assist youth to reach their fullest potential. Watch **Executive Director Christopher Baker Scott** and

Student Support Coordinator Alan Abutin on the **WFSB Great Day at 9a** program discussing their work: [Sun Scholars Inc.](#)

Read this month's "*Spotlight on What's Right*" newsletter for the list of programs - as far away as **California, Utah and Colorado** - where our transitional aged youth will be attending this Fall!

Our newsletter also highlights two youth who are part of that list and have benefitted from the Sun Scholars Inc. program.

Zion is studying **Social Work** at **Central Connecticut State University**. While on an international trip with Sun Scholars Inc., he saw the hardships of children across the globe which have inspired him to serve others. He speaks with such enthusiasm and is described as an



"amazing young man with a great spirit." Read his story in the newsletter.



Also read about **Gavin** who attends the **University of Hartford** as he describes his work towards a major in **Entrepreneurship** and a minor in **Finance**. He has a "*greater purpose*" to "*cultivate my creativity and my ideas and turn them into real life projects to help everyday people.*" Gavin gives credit to both the **Wilderness School** and **Sun Scholars Inc.** for supporting him.

Congratulations once again to the **July 2024 Employees of the Month!** Who has been nominated to receive the **August Award?** Is it you? Read on...



Our **Transitional Supports and Success Division (TSS)** put on the first annual ***Building Wings Convention!*** Up



to 50 youth took part in interactive learning and skill building in the three core areas of housing, financial literacy and relationship/communication/conflict resolution. Thank you to **Sana Cotton of Unashamed Inc.** for providing her inspirational message!

The **Wilderness School** had another great summer of **1-day programs up to 20-day expeditions!** With activities that include hiking, camping, rock climbing, and canoeing, the programs emphasize team building, peer relations, self-reliance, responsibility, improved self-concept, and conflict resolution for teens across the state. We are grateful for **Representative Mark Anderson** who attended a graduation to support our youth and staff!



Speaking of youth, Region 3 hosted the quarterly **Youth Advisory Board Meeting** in New Haven. Our youth are resilient, insightful, strong and have such great ideas on how to improve the system! Thank you to **DCF Solnit South Nurse, Danielle Hallway**, for telling us her **journey to success** and the lessons she learned along the way.

Connecticut was represented well in Washington, DC for the **Chapin Hall & Casey Family Programs Community Pathways Convening**. **Karrol-Ann Brown, Dr. Nicole Taylor, Samaris Rose and I**, met with Child Welfare jurisdictions from across the country to discuss **Prevention** efforts, community collaboration and other topics to support children and families. **Ken Mysogland** brilliantly led discussions about the **Care Management Entity** in Connecticut which has received national attention! We are so proud of our work!



A special thanks to **Rebecca Jones Gaston** who is the Commissioner of the **Administration on Children, Youth, and Families**, at the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and **Miranda Lynch-Smith**, Senior Policy Advisor for Child and Family Well-Being, Domestic Policy Council, **The White House** for their ongoing support of Connecticut!

Our work also was highlighted during the 47th Annual NACC Child Welfare Law Conference in Utah. I served on a panel with **Ira Lustbader, Litigation Director and Chief Program Officer at Children's Rights** and **Josh Michtom an Attorney at the Office of the Chief Public Defender** entitled: *Alignment on Family: System Change, Racial Justice, Consent Decree Exit, and a Culture of Safely Preserving Families* while attending with **Susan Hamilton and Zoe Stout**.



After a late-night flight - which turned into an early morning one - I was the keynote speaker for the **Governor's Prevention Partnership Healing, Empower and Resilience (H.E.R.) Summit**. The summit aimed to "ignite the fire" within every girl and to empower BIPOC girls between 12-17 years of age and their adult mentors with the skills to achieve overall success!



Thank you to **Senator Richard Blumenthal, Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Comptroller Sean Scanlon, Representative Jill Barry and Senator MD Rahman** for attending "*The Olive Branch end of summer backpack and school supply giveaway!*" Hundreds of children across the state benefit



from the supports of the Olive Branch each year. Thank you as well to **Dr. Joyce Taylor** for her remarks!

The unique roles Fathers play in the life of a child were on display during the "*Fatherhood - The Next Level 2024*" conference. Participants took



part in hearing from leaders across our state - and fathers themselves - about their experiences and ideas for the future. Thank you to **Anthony Gay** and all on the planning committee for making this day special!

Lastly, our new **Mandated Reporter Training** was finalized! Important changes to the law - such as Mandated Reporters now being able to conduct a "**preliminary inquiry**" into the information brought to their attention to determine if it meets the "**reasonable suspicion**" of child abuse and neglect threshold requiring a report to be made to the Careline are explained.

The training also includes an interactive "**roadmap**" of supports for families. Watch it here: [Seeking Support is a Sign of Strength.](#)

We encourage everyone to take the new training!

Thank you for all that you do!

Stay strong everyone!