



Employee of the Month Awards!

Congratulations to the following staff who have been nominated within their respective Divisions to receive the December Employee of the Month Award!

Rocco Carbone - Careline

We are excited to recognize Rocco Carbone, Social Worker at the Careline as our Employee of the Month! Rocco consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic, making a significant impact on our team and the families we serve. He is always ready to take the lead, offering support to his colleagues and fostering a positive, collaborative environment. He has actively participated as a champion, a subject matter expert (SME) and tester in the development of CT-KIND. Rocco's dedication to producing high-quality work is evident in everything he does. His attention to detail ensures that he consistently delivers detailed reports. Additionally, his positivity and willingness to lend a hand make him the epitome of a team player. Rocco regularly steps up to assist others and continuously works to improve practices within the Careline. Rocco, we deeply appreciate your commitment to teamwork, hard work, and your unwavering support. Your efforts make a significant difference at Careline, and we are grateful for all your contributions!

Kinshasa Alston - Bridgeport Area Office

It is with pleasure that Kinshasa "Kinsha" Alston, Social Worker, is nominated as employee of the month. Kinsha is a long-time employee of DCF. Kinsha is always a staunch advocate for her families. She is always very detailed and ensures that her work is timely, and accurate. She works extremely well with our external partners and has a stellar reputation in the community. She is always willing to lend a helping hand to her co-workers and answers the call of duty every day without fail. Kinsha recently received an accolade from one of our most trusted child abuse doctors at Yale New Haven Hospital, Dr. Andrea Asnes, outlining Kinsha's dedication to her role in child welfare. Dr. Asnes worked with Kinsha on a suspected medical neglect investigation and Dr. Asnes was so impressed with Kinsha's steadfast commitment to family advocacy, her attention to detail, and the energy she brings to her work. Dr. Asnes outlined that this was a family challenged with poverty and by the fact that both parents were young, have recently arrived in the US, and are undocumented, Kinsha went out of her way to gather every medical detail for the child involved, and in doing so, learned that both parents had tried to do the right thing and that the healthcare system had let them down. Instead of substantiating the medical neglect that was



alleged, Kinsha is now championing the needs of the family. Kinsha embodies the very best values of DCF and truly puts families first.

Brenin White - Norwalk Area Office

The Norwalk Office is thrilled to recognize Brenin White, Investigator Social Worker, as our Employee of the Month. For the past 15 years, Brenin White has been an integral part of our team, embodying dedication and passion in everything he does. His heart is truly in his work, and it shows through his unwavering commitment to excellence and his drive to go above and beyond every day. But it's not just his hard work that sets him apart—it's the way he cares about his coworkers. Brenin fosters a sense of camaraderie and support, making those around him feel valued and appreciated. Brenin chose the field of social work to help children and families and connect with others who shared similar goals. Brenin provides a supportive environment for new and seasoned staff which provides a strong sense of belonging and fosters meaningful work relationships. His infectious personality and positive attitude bring joy to the workplace, creating an environment where everyone feels uplifted. We are incredibly grateful to have someone like Brenin on our team. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition and thank you for 15 amazing years of service!

Saverio Mancini - Waterbury Area Office

We would like to recognize Saverio Mancini, Social Worker, as Employee of the Month. To us, Saverio is the Employee of the Year. He is an excellent Adolescent worker who will go above and beyond the call of what is being asked of him, for his youth. Saverio is the voice for the youth on his caseload and will speak on their behalf- ALWAYS. He knows what is in their best interest and will step in even at times when the youth might be going through a difficult period becoming their anchor by standing alongside them. Saverio never gives up on his youth and encourages the youth to do the same. Despite the ups and downs and the high demands on workers, Saverio has risen to the top to make sure that all the needs of his youth are met. He has been able to develop long lasting relationships with his youth and they TRUST him, which gives our youth a brighter perspective of the DCF system. He is a mentor to new social workers within the office. Helping, guiding, and encouraging them, when needed. He is also a big part of the SUN Scholars Program and this past August 2024; he dedicated his time and chaperoned a trip to Peru with his youth and other adolescents throughout the state. Saverio gained an amazing and humbling experience being in Peru as well as support his youth and others, while there. The Beauty, Diversity and Resourcefulness of the Peruvian people left a lasting impression and was truly an inspirational experience both will never forget. Saverio is a champion and will always access risk and safety without judgement.



Irving Amaral - Danbury Area Office

Irving Amaral is a Social Worker Trainee who began his employment with the Department on 7/12/24. He acclimated well to agency needs and expectations, as he eventually inherited cases with multiple tasks and assignments, most of which were past due. Irving efficiently addressed the outstanding tasks in a timely time manner, which heavily contributed to children achieving timely permanency. Irving is a quick learner and is receptive to constructive criticism with a desire to learn. His documentation is clear, detailed, and concise. He is a strong advocate for the children and families on his case load, evidenced by his relentless advocacy. He is efficient, dependable, and seemingly maintains continuity of a positive attitude. Irving has worked tirelessly to provide the children and families on his case load with quality services and ensures that families receive the most appropriate services to meet their individual needs. During his time with the agency, Irving has established and maintained positive relationships with his families and providers. He demonstrates a strong passion for CPS and appears genuinely vested regarding his work with children and families served by the Department.

Evelyn Maldonado - Torrington Area Office

Evelyn Maldonado, Social Work Case Aide is nominated at Employee of the Month. She has been with the agency for 29+ years and has no plans of slowing down. Evelyn consistently demonstrates dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to DCF and the family's we serve. Evelyn is always available to help or assist a worker whenever in need. Evelyn is a tireless worker who does not bat an eye when asked to take on overtime after working a long day to help staff. Evelyn has demonstrated she is a true team player. We all can learn from Evelyn, not only from her work performance but also by her caring demeanor. Evelyn has outstanding critical thinking skills and can creatively work through challenges with ease. Evelyn's positive attitude and work ethic make her a vital part of the team. She continues to inspire us with her passion and love for this work. Evelyn is the lead (Santa's helper) for the toy drives in our area. She has elevated the toy drive to new levels ensuring our children receive gifts on Christmas day! Evelyn is that employee who goes above and beyond to help the office and the community we serve. We are thankful for having Evelyn and truly appreciate her kindness and support she provides to the Torrington office.



Tameka Saunders - New Haven Area Office

Tameka Saunders is an Investigations Social Worker in intake. Being a front-line worker takes courage, bravery to speak out and be consistent in order to meet the needs of families. She is resourceful, kind and understands how together we work better. Ms. Saunders took the lead in uplifting intake by introducing a snack cart and ensuring that investigators have opportunities to mix in this telework community. Ms. Saunders is diligent and getting her cases done, timely, and has been an advocate in the community and ensuring children and families' needs are met. Ms. Saunders is an example of what a DCF worker should be.

Tera Rucker and Tarvares Lloyd - Milford Area Office

Social Work Supervisor Tera Rucker and Social Worker Tarvares Lloyd as the Milford Office employees of the month for their teamwork on an extraordinarily challenging case. Tarvares and Tera have been diligently working as a team to ensure the needs of sibling group of 3 children who came into care on 11/6/24. Two of the girls, ages 6 and 12 are nonverbal, autistic, and have required daily transportation to and from their foster homes and daily childcare in the Milford DCF Office. Tera and Tarvares have also had to open the office on weekends and holidays to provide childcare to the girls and as well as go to the foster homes to assist the foster parents to provide care for the girls. They have both worked 6-7 days per week since the day the girls were removed and have either transported or provided childcare for them every day since then. When the children came into care, we knew very little information about them and Tarvares and Tera have had to quickly understand the children's likes, dislikes, and needs and respond with patience and understanding as the children struggled to adjust to their surroundings and people. Knowing the girls do best with consistency, Tarvares and Tera have continued to be involved in the daily childcare of the girls instead of passing the work off to other staff take to their place. They have embraced the ongoing challenges with a smile on their face, maintained a positive attitude and continued to show up every day to keep doing the work. There have been days when the workday started as early as 6 am and did not end until late into the evening, and they were both here in the office until the placement was secured and the children were placed. In addition to the work on this case, they were also managing the rest of SW Lloyd's caseload and SWS Rucker was managing her other responsibilities for her unit and her role as a Union Steward. The collaboration to ensure the safety and well-being of the children, included not only the CPS Team, but our Office Director and many other staff across the state. Without the advocacy and support the children would have been placed in a hospital setting and not had the opportunity to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with a family. My team have adopted my Motto "Teamwork makes the Dream Work" and I am proud and honored to have them be a part of Denise's Diamonds and recognize them for all their hard work and caring spirits.



Mallory Ducharme - Norwich Area Office

Mallory Ducharme, Social Worker, is nominated for employee of the month. Mallory has been employed with the Department for approximately seven years. During that time, Mallory has consistently gone above and beyond in the Norwich office. She is always quick to help her coworkers, whether that be through explaining how to complete something or helping with a case matter. Mallory is always the first worker to offer shadowing experience or giving helpful advice to trainees. She offers herself as a mentor to the newer staff, listening to their concerns and walking them through new experiences. In addition to mentoring trainees, she also consistently supervises an intern, a few who subsequently were hired by the Department. While providing hands-on learning experiences to trainees and interns, Mallory

consistently meets the demands of her caseload, timely and efficiently. She is an advocate for the families that she works with, as well as her coworkers.

Sarah Rygiel - Middletown Area Office

Sarah Rygiel, Social Worker, is being nominated for Employee of the Month on the great work she did on her S. L. case. Sarah became involved due to IPV with the parents and a safety plan was put in place. Father was communicative with Sarah throughout but then was arrested for this IPV incident. Sarah continued to engage him in services and a CRM. We then received an EC regarding one of the children receiving a head injury. Sarah continues to work this case with both parents and obtained information from the daycare as to what occurred. She actively remained involved, making visits to see the family as well as engaging with father who remained out of the home. Sarah has engaged with father and ensured that he is involved in services to be a part of his children's lives. He is involved in services and cooperating. Mother is now involved with VOCA and seeing a therapist. Both the parents appear to be on the right track in ensuring that they are involved with services and able to meet the needs of their children. Sarah always puts safety of children first. She is remarkable in engaging with families initially at our investigation ensuring that they are aware of our involvement and that they know child safety is first. She has built a lot of trust with parents who are cautious when involved with DCF is involved. She is a tremendous Social Worker, and I am happy to have her on my team.

Katie Roger - Willimantic Area Office

Katie Roger, Social Worker, is being chosen for Employee of Month due to her dedication to her families and her strong work ethic. She has managed several complex matters on her caseload with professionalism and consistent follow through. Katie is a strong advocate for her families, and she identifies their strengths as well as areas of need. Katie collaborates with peers, and offers and accepts assistance, to benefit the team. Katie is also an active member of the Diversity Action Team. She assisted with making the Pioneers of Change celebration for Hispanic Heritage month a huge success! Katie ensures that the entire office is made aware of upcoming DAT events. Her enthusiasm to keep everyone informed is noteworthy! Katie is personable, caring and a pleasure to work with! Thank you, Katie for all your hard work and contributions to our office!!



Amanda Orsi - Hartford Area Office

Amanda Orsi, Social Worker, is being nominated for Employee of the Month in recognition of her exceptional contributions to the FBR/BSF specialty unit. Amanda joined the team in 2021 and has quickly become an invaluable member. I had the privilege of supervising Amanda starting in 2022, and throughout this time, she has consistently demonstrated outstanding dedication and skill. Amanda has an excellent understanding of the unique needs of the families we serve and consistently works to meet those needs in a compassionate and effective manner. Her particular interest in working with families affected by substance misuse is especially noteworthy, as this aligns with her prior experience in the field before joining DCF. This focus has greatly benefited our unit and the families we support. In addition to her expertise in

substance misuse, Amanda has shown remarkable resilience in handling challenging cases, particularly those involving difficult parents. Amanda has one case in particular in which she has received numerous threats from the parents related to a termination of parental rights. Amanda has remained steadfast in her support of the CIP youth's desire to secure a permanency plan that ensures the youth's physical and psychological safety. Further, it should be noted that even when managing cases with significant nuances/complexities, Amanda approaches her work with children and families with professionalism, patience, and a commitment to achieving the best outcomes for the families that we service. Her ability to balance compassion with professionalism makes her an exceptional asset to our team, and I wholeheartedly recommend her for Employee of the Month.

Emily Diaz - Manchester Area Office

Emily Diaz, Social Worker, is being nominated as Employee of the Month for December. September and October were extremely busy and difficult months for Emily. Emily had multiple removals and one specific removal of three youth that are only Spanish speaking, and we had no relative placements for. This created night to night placement crossing the entire state for these children. Emily's perseverance and dedication to this work was seen everyday as she grew more and more exhausted. Despite this she continued to ensure that the kids got to school and had what they needed to be safe. She spent time speaking to each kid checking in and make sure that they were feeling ok. This was no easy task as there were what seemed to be endless nights waiting on placements till 8 or 9pm, having to keep the office open late as there were no placements identified, and the children were hungry and exhausted. Emily has kept her positive attitude, smile, and even laughter alive during this time. She was able to also have a team of peers assisting her with the numerous transports and placements. Her work on other cases seemed to be piling up with no letting up on crisis in sight. I am nominating Emily for employee of the month as her positive attitude and commitment to the families we serve goes above and beyond. At times, she has been so overwhelmed that I am sure she has felt that perhaps returning to DCF (after previously leaving) was not worth it. Although she still is digging out and recovering from this removal, she stays strong, works hard, and stays committed to ensuring that all her families are well.



Susan Brock - New Britain Area Office

Sue Brock, Social Work Supervisor, has been a valued member of the New Britain office for the past 12 years. Over those years, Sue has been instrumental in the overall functioning of the office. She regularly makes herself available to ensure that the team has what is needed to get the job done. In addition, she goes above and beyond in planning with our community partners to secure gifts and placements packets for the children and families we serve. One of the ISW recently shared this about Sue: Sue has always been a help to me, no matter the question or

problem. I am not even sure half of the things I ask of her are her actual job. Despite being pulled in a million directions on any given day, she finds the answer promptly.

Lorraine Perez - Meriden Area Office

The Meriden Office proudly nominates Social Worker Lorraine Perez for the Employee of the Month award. Lorraine has been a social worker for the Dept. for the last 17 years and for the last 8 years, she has been an adolescent social worker. We would like to recognize her exceptional efforts to support young adults significantly improving their well-being and achieving their personal goals. We appreciate Lorraine's tireless dedication, particularly when she took the initiative to represent the Meriden office as a Youth Coordinator for the Youth Advisory Board encouraging the youth to engage and participate. Recently, Lorraine ensured that one of her youths could attend the Governor's Holiday Party giving him a unique experience he truly enjoyed. Lorraine, thank you for your unwavering commitment to supporting our young adults every day and collaborating with community providers to help them meet their full potential. We are lucky to have you.

Pauline Rankins - PRTF (South)

Children Services Worker Pauline Rankins is Solnit South PRTF's December Employee of the Month. Pauline is a dedicated and passionate individual who has been nominated for EOM due to her unwavering commitment to the youth we serve and her active involvement in the community. Despite working third shift, she consistently finds time to give back and support those in need. She is a consistent team member who is client and community focused. Pauline's selfless spirit shines through in her leadership of the annual Adopt-A-Family initiative during the holiday season. Each year, she brings her coworkers together to help families in need by ensuring their children experience the joy of a memorable Christmas. By asking if anyone knows of a family struggling during the holidays, Pauline creates an opportunity for others to give back and pay it forward, encouraging a cycle of kindness and generosity. In addition to her holiday efforts, Pauline continues to make a lasting impact throughout the year, especially when it comes to creating special memories for youth. Through Operation Prom Time, she gathers gently used prom dresses, shoes, and accessories for young people in the Hartford area, ensuring they can experience the magic of prom without the financial burden. Her community-oriented mindset and ability to rally others to support these causes demonstrate her exceptional leadership and compassion. Pauline embodies the spirit of teamwork on campus and is truly an inspiration to all, using her time and resources to make a tangible difference in the lives of others.



Jodi Oakes - Fiscal

It is with great pride that the DCF Fiscal Business Office recognizes Jodi Oakes (Fiscal Administrative Officer) as Employee of the Month. In a short period of time, working at DCF, Jodi's has amazed Fiscal Supervisors and Managers by what she has accomplished. Her ability to manage her large workload of responsibilities, is nothing short of remarkable. (Including - Travel for Region 3 and 5, Tuition Reimbursement for the entire DCF, Union Funded Travel, Client Hotels, etc.) Jodi has even volunteered to help out in the DCF Payroll Office when staffing was short, due to vacancies. Jodi consistently delivers exceptional results while maintaining a level of professionalism and dedication that sets a standard of excellence. Her work ethic, efficiency, and attention to detail ensure that every task is completed with precision and care. Beyond her impressive skills, Jodi is a true team player who uplifts those around her with her positive attitude and willingness to support her colleagues. She exemplifies the value of hard work, resilience and commitment that make the BO stronger. Jodi is truly an unsung hero and has even shown great leadership qualities in the DCF Fiscal Business Office. For these reasons and more, Jodi is selected as DCF Fiscal Business Office "Employee of the Month" for December!

Yvette Cortez - Behavioral Health Family and Community Services Division

Program Supervisor Yvette Cortez is being recognized by the Behavioral Health Community Services Division for her contributions to further our state's Children's Mental Health system. Recently, Yvette has taken a leading role in enhancing postvention responses following the untimely deaths of youth by suicide. Throughout this initiative, she has identified areas for improvement and implementing effective solutions while collaborating with key stakeholders. Yvette has worked diligently to strengthen the connection between the Regional Suicide Advisory Boards, Regional School Safety Coordinators, and Mobile Crisis Teams, ensuring a coordinated and effective postvention response. Additionally, she has partnered with Mobile Crisis to raise awareness of their services across Connecticut, ensuring that families are informed and supported. Yvette has also worked closely with the Mobile Crisis Performance Improvement Center to analyze data and address any disparities, taking targeted steps to improve outcomes. Her has been integral in assessing program processes, gathering stakeholder feedback, and introducing innovative strategies which has the potential to make a significant impact. Beyond her work with Mobile Crisis, Yvette also supports the Behavioral Health Community Services Division by collaborating with DMHAS on the Mental Health Block Grant submission, which includes the allocation plan, annual data, and bi-annual application. Yvette's continuous improvements have streamlined the process and enhanced critical components of the Mental Health Block Grant submission process, which supports many behavioral health initiatives for children across Connecticut.

I'm Speechless!

Nachi Bhatt - Education/Unified School District #2

Nachi Bhatt, Educational Consultant, has continuously served as USD#2's most valuable education consultant for many years. All who have worked with Nachi know very well his depth

of knowledge, meticulous attention to detail, and ability to maintain the highest standard of excellence in all aspects of the work. As a trusted, vital contributor to the continued operation and growth of USD#2's regional division, Nachi has been instrumental with the on-boarding of new personnel to ensure the professional effectiveness and strength of the education consultant in all areas of work throughout the regions. As an adjunct trainer for the Academy of Workforce Development, Nachi provides the "education" portion of the pre-service training for new workers. Nachi supports the agency on both the state and national levels. He is annually appointed to the statewide Special Education Advisory Council and serves on the nationwide Foster Care and Education Division's Child Welfare Education Network. Nachi is an invaluable asset to the agency and USD#2, we are forever grateful and appreciative to have Nachi's expertise champion the betterment of our students and families in CT. Thank you Nachi---you are the best!!!

Patricia Thompson - Office of Legal Affairs

Principal Attorney Patricia Thompson is a founding member of the Legal Division and has worked in multiple area offices, always providing high quality legal advice and guidance. With her many years with the Department, she brings a wealth of experience and insight to every legal consult. Pat is meticulous in all aspects of her work, while actively seeking out and participating in opportunities to enrich her robust knowledge of child welfare law. She frequently shares resources with her legal division colleagues, ensuring others remain current with recent legal developments. Pat is a mentor to newer colleagues and a support and advocate for the area office social work team. An essential part of the Hartford Area Office legal team, Pat manages a high volume of cases with a dedicated "legal lens" focused on how the Department can best serve children and families. Pat, we appreciate you! Keep up the great work!



Kelly Pellegrino - Centralized Transportation Unit

Kelly Pellegrino is an Office Assistant with The Central Transportation Unit. Since joining the CTU in March of 2022, Kelly has proven herself to be integral part of our office staff. She is dependable, knowledgeable, personable, and a pleasure to work with. Although working in the CTU Dispatch Office can be daunting and not for the faint of heart, Kelly accepts the challenge daily. She has strong computer skills and the ability to multi-task. These skills allow her to processes the numerous transportation requests that come into our office, assist with scheduling, respond to countless emails and phone calls, assist our drivers, keep our log books up to date, and manually collect and process all of our data (which is a full-time job in itself). Despite having all of these responsibilities, Kelly comes to work every day with a smile on her face and a "whatever it takes" attitude, while never seeking recognition for everything that she accomplishes.....Thank you Kelly, for your dedication to our unit and the clients that we serve!!

Laray Johnson - PRTF (North)

Solnit North is pleased to nominate Children Services Worker Laray Johnson for Employee of the Month. Laray's leadership, compassion, and unwavering positivity make him an ideal candidate for this recognition. Throughout his time working, staff have been consistently impressed by his leadership, dedication, and commitment to his work, his colleagues, and the youth we serve. Laray has a natural ability to connect with others. His youth-driven mindset allows him to inspire and mentor with ease, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Whether it's taking lead in a crisis or assisting a coworker, he approaches every situation with a calm demeanor and remarkable patience, ensuring that everyone feels heard and valued. What stands out most about Laray is his genuine passion for the work we do. He doesn't just get through the shift— he enjoys the process and approaches every challenge with enthusiasm. His grounded and down-to-earth nature makes him approachable, and he's always willing to lend a hand when needed, making him a truly wonderful coworker to have.