

A Message from Commissioner Hill-Lilly



March is National Social Work Month with the 2024 theme - "**Empowering Social Workers!**"

We have one of the toughest jobs in state government as fentanyl, mental health issues, violence, and other emerging societal issues impact child safety.

Helping the people who help the people is one of my priorities and in recognition of those employees who have demonstrated outstanding performance, we have commenced the **Employee of the Month** award. Each Division leader will nominate one employee for this award with the winners being acknowledged in our "**Spotlight on What's Right**" newsletter along with receiving a signed certificate. Who was nominated this month..... read on!



Director of Organizational Development Lenisa Mathew spoke about the Department's work to support staff and the Employee of the Month award on the **WFSB Great Day at 9a** show this week. Great job Lenisa! Watch her here: [Social Work Month](#)

International Women's Day also takes place in March. This year's theme is "**Invest in Women: Accelerate progress.**" Across the globe, women are recognized for their achievements especially those who inspire inclusion throughout their work.



Congratulations to **Social Work Supervisor Jeanette Morrison** who received the **2024 Janet E. Williams Humanitarian Award**.

This award is given annually to the DCF employee who demonstrates a strong passion for children and families and works towards the advancement and betterment of those on his or her caseload or within the Black community.



"**A Father's Intuition**" is the story of **Diego** and the day he was finally able to bring his daughter home. Read in this month's "**Spotlight**" why he refers to **Social Worker Kelsey Brewer** as "A great, great, great person," and the messages he has for others involved with DCF.

Did you know our **Legislative Director, Mike Carrone**, used to bench press 495 pounds? In the newsletter, Mike describes for us his journey of being a **former college football player and coach** and how he found his way to DCF. We appreciate Mike's extensive efforts so far during this legislative session!

Thank you to the staff - and especially the youth - at **Mansfield Middle School** for hosting **Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz** as she moderated a discussion on **Social Connections** in schools. Along with **Representatives Boyd and Haddad, Superintendent of Schools Peter Dart, Principal Larry Barlow**, and other leaders, I was honored to speak



and ... meet some fantastic young people! It is clear they have the answers to supporting one another - as long as the adults listen!



Speaking of youth, we are calling on all young artists to join the **Youth Arts Collaborative Mentoring Program** to unlock their creative potential. Likewise, we are encouraging adult artists to volunteer and mentor youth artists! Be a part of a creative community and celebrate the passion of our young people. Please contact **Heather Jones** at Heather.Jones@ct.gov to express your interest.

Our Behavioral Health system is evolving. With much gratitude for the collaborative efforts of the leadership of the General Assembly's **Committee on Children**, the **Office of Policy and Management** and our **Contracted Providers**, we are enhancing support for the STAR homes. Why did the name change from **STAR to STTAR** and what else does it signify? Read on.....



During one of the most traumatic and uncertain times in a child's life, our **foster parents** open their homes - and their hearts - to embrace a child in need. Effective 4/1/24, for the March stipend cycle, they will be receiving a **5% increase in the monthly foster care board and care reimbursement**. This is one tangible example of how we can immediately enhance our support.



As part of the **Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) self-assessment**, focus groups are underway with parents and youth who have lived expertise and licensed caregivers. We are grateful for their willingness to share personal experiences, candor, and thoughtful recommendations to **improve the Child Welfare system!** We honor their voice.

We have had a busy month and I look forward to our collective work as we serve Connecticut's children and families!