



Employee of the Month Awards!

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

Kimberley Casey - Transitional Supports and Success

Kim is a Social Worker within Transitional Supports and Success. She is currently the DCF Liaison to DOC at Robinson Correctional, Osborn Correctional and Hartford Community Correctional Center. Kim was the Detention and Manson Youth Liaison for close to 20 years and recently transitioned to work with incarcerated fathers. Kim is a strong advocate for incarcerated parents and youth. Kim plays a key role in workgroups and multi-disciplinary teams to ensure our incarcerated population is being represented and planned for. Kim always goes above and beyond to ensure the incarcerated population are being heard and considered. Kim also assists Area Office Social Workers to obtain what they need from DOC as well as explain the policy and procedures at DOC. She also assists DOC in understanding DCF policies and practices. The Interagency Navigation Unit is lucky to have Kim as a valued member of the team!



Jason Pope - PRTF (South)

Jason has been named Employee of the Month for May 2024 due to his exceptional commitment to fostering a safe and positive environment at the Solnit South campus. As a dedicated team player, Jason consistently goes above and beyond to ensure the well-being and safety of all the youth under his care. His unwavering positive attitude and daily greetings to colleagues and youth significantly contribute to a nurturing and uplifting campus atmosphere. This infectious positivity enhances the overall culture and encourages others to adopt a similar outlook, making Solnit South PRTF a more supportive and secure place for everyone. Jason's exemplary dedication and cheerful demeanor make him a standout employee, deserving of this recognition.

Felecia Williams - PRTF (North)

Felecia consistently goes above and beyond in her role, always giving 100% effort in everything she does. Her dedication to assisting staff on all three shifts ensures smooth transitions and optimal operational efficiency in the cottage. Additionally, her commitment to providing encouragement and kindness fosters a positive and supportive environment for the youth and staff. Felecia exemplifies the core values of Solnit North through her outstanding work ethic, teamwork, and compassion towards others. Her exceptional performance and demeanor make her an outstanding role model and deserving candidate for Employee of the Month recognition.



Melanie Clark and Taliferrio Gallaher - Solnit South Hospital

Melanie Clark and Taliferrio Gallaher are the dynamic duo CSUS team at Solnit South Hospital. Both are being nominated as they are the yin to each other's yang, complementing each other's skill sets in such a harmonious and effective way. Melanie Clark, CSUS and long-time DCF employee, is a role model, teacher, and leader. She utilizes her creativity, focus on detail, organization, and keen sense of humor, to not only support all the CSW teams, but also promotes the best clinical care for all Solnit youth. Taliferrio Gallaher, CSUS for the Sachus unit, exhibits the calm, cool, collected skill sets to calm any chaos. Taliferrio's ability to de-escalate situations and youth with compassion is truly an art. A role model to his unit and Solnit youth, his supportive leadership, is ever-present for youth and fellow employees. Working together, they have covered many critical needs, remain solution focused, and are the perfect definition of what collaboration can do.

Erin Mahony - Contracts Management

Erin is a Program Supervisor in the Contracts Regional Support Unit. She has tirelessly worked with her team to successfully transition DCF's day care referrals and payments from DCF to Care4Kids. Through this process, she has demonstrated her unique ability to collaborate with both internal and external stakeholders while leading her staff through a challenging transition and innovatively navigating the challenges of this large-scale project. Thank you, Erin!



Marc Williams - Academy for Workforce Development

Mr. Williams is an outstanding trainer and has had a positive impact on the Academy for Workforce Development's team. In addition to his training responsibilities and overseeing all the DRS training curriculums, Mr. Williams has developed a strong training partnership with the CT State Police and CT Drug Control Division. Mr. William's desire to assist the workforce become safer while in the community has positively impacted the Department. Due to his partnerships,

the Academy has been able to offer the following trainings: EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING: HOW TO GATHER ACCURATE INFORMATION SAFELY, WORKER SAFETY USE OF AUTHORITY AND DE-ESCALATION TRAINING FOR ON-GOING STAFF, CT DRUG CONTROL: LICIT AND ILLICIT SUBSTANCE TRAINING & SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS FOR STAFF. In addition to these trainings, Mr. Williams is also working with the CT State Police to bring DCF staff to the CT GANG AWARENESS AND INFORMATIONAL TRAINING in the fall. Finally, Mr. Williams always volunteers to do additional tasks in the office and assists those who need help, offering his expertise to multiple staff. Despite having a lot of work, Mr. Williams is constantly asking how others are doing and finding out how he can help out others.

Marcia Robinson - Education/Unified School District #2

Marcia has been leading the agency's no-nexus unit for the several years. She has been a tremendous leader in this work in ensuring that every child receives free and appropriate education services. Marcia excelled in gaining knowledge of the Connecticut Special Education Data System (CT-SEDS) to ensure that all Individual Education Plans (IEP) for students are compliant and meeting students' academic and social needs. She has been instrumental in providing professional development and training for staff to reflect on their practice, analyze student data and outcomes, and identify areas for growth and improvement for their individual professional learning. Marcia makes a substantial contribution to the operation, growth, and development of Unified School District #2---thank you Marcia!!!



Mark Feller - Office of Legal Affairs

Attorney Mark Feller has made significant contributions to the legal division through his unwavering dedication, professionalism, and expertise. Attorney Feller, who is the sole in-house attorney for Region 1, has consistently demonstrated a commitment to excellence in every facet of his work despite the challenges of covering an entire region. His colleagues hold him in high regard, recognizing his thoroughness and integrity. Additionally, Attorney Feller zealously advocates for the Department during administration hearings, ensuring that the Department receives high quality legal representation while also taking into consideration the sensitive nature of our work and how the outcomes of these proceedings impact the families we serve. Thank you Mark for all of your hard work!



Andrea Sellers - Child Welfare/Foster Care Division

It is with great admiration that we select Social Worker, Andrea Sellers for employee of the month. Andrea is an exemplary employee, dependable, cooperative, and hardworking. She is a Social Worker assigned to the Educational Professional Investigations Unit (EPIU). This unit holds the responsibility of investigating allegations of abuse and neglect, when the alleged

perpetrator(s) is acting in a professional capacity as an employee of a school, daycare, camp, and transportation companies licensed or contracted by a board of education or Office of Early Childhood. It's evident that Andrea's commitment to her role goes above and beyond, as demonstrated by her thorough knowledge of investigation procedures and her willingness to tackle challenges head-on. Completing her master's degree while juggling work responsibilities showcases Andrea's exceptional work ethic and determination. Her ability to balance her professional duties with personal and academic pursuits is impressive and serves as an inspiration to her colleagues. Andrea's cooperative spirit, willingness to voice her opinion constructively and her 100% effort in all tasks makes her a valuable asset to the team. Her achievement of obtaining her MSW in May is a testament to her dedication to continuous learning and professional development. Once again, congratulations to Andrea on this well-deserved recognition.

Tania Mayen - Region 1 & 5

Tania is a Social Worker who has been with the department for under 2 years. In her short time at the DCF she has demonstrated empathy and compassion towards all her cases, particularly in one instance where a sibling group (brother and sister) experienced the devastating loss of their brother, leaving their world shattered.

Tania continues to be a stabilizing source for the children and works hard to ensure they are supported. In the office Tania is always filled with positive energy. Tania's passion for Social Work and commitment to doing what's right shines through in her work. She embodies the qualities of a great Social Worker; determined, proactive and resilient. Her unwavering commitment to being a voice for her children is inspiring. We call her 'The Quiet Storm'!



Lisa Cassista - Region 2 & 3

Lisa has been a Social Worker with the Department for 15 years with the past 5 years serving as an adolescent Social Worker. She brings a positive attitude to the job every day and always supports and advocates for the adolescent population she serves. Like her adolescent unit co-workers, Lisa is a team player always offering to assist a co-worker when needed. She ensures that the needs are met for the youth/young adults on her caseload, no matter what time of day, all while raising a family of her own. There is one particular case where Lisa really showed all her attributes. She has a 19-year-old developmentally disabled young adult who was stuck in the inpatient unit at Middlesex Hospital for 7 months (9/23-4/24) after her group home declined to have her return after an ER visit. This set off a collaborative effort between DCF, DDS, Probate Court, and Middlesex Hospital that included twice per week TEAMS meetings, hours of follow up efforts locating a new placement, and 3-4 visits per month by Lisa to see the young adult in the hospital (including weekends). This was all while Lisa still met the needs of the 14 other youth/young adults on her caseload. Lisa is not only an asset to the Department but to the State of CT.

Jasmine Hawes - Region 4 & 6

Jasmine received a letter from an incarcerated Father who is currently in federal prison out of state. The work that Jasmine did with this father to help facilitate contact and build a relationship between him and his daughter was exceptional. The father was incredibly grateful for all that Jasmine did and wrote a letter highlighting his gratitude. In his letter he gave her the "Clark Kent Positive Impact Award." His letter reads, in part, "I hope all is well, if not, hope my words brighten your day. Especially since you spend so much time doing that for everyone else, that's why my subject is titled Clark Kent. You really be out there saving the world and changing lives. You are truly dedicated to your work and there has never been a time when I have called your phone, and you weren't helping someone besides yourself. You are amazing. You're a blessing to not just mine, but Ariana's life as well." The tremendous fatherhood engagement work highlighted by this father and the relationship that Jasmine built is a testament to passion and commitment to the children and families she serves every day.

A large, stylized graphic of the word "STUPENDOUS!" in a bold, orange, bubbly font with a black outline and a slight shadow effect.

Aimee Fong - Health Management and Oversight Division

This employee is a Nurse Consultant in Region 5 and supervises 3 Nurses in that region. As a Supervisor, Aimee is supportive, knowledgeable, and always looking out for the best interests of her Nurses so that they can be successful and confident in their work as consultants to the Social Work team. As a Nurse leader, Aimee has been an active member of the Nursing Standards and Practice committee always drawing on her years of experience as a Nurse both within and outside of DCF to create standards of care that ensure optimum oversight of the children in our care. As a colleague, Aimee is always willing to provide supervisory coverage for other regions and has been a fantastic mentor to both new Nurses and other Nurse Supervisors. And lastly, Aimee goes the extra mile when it comes to coordinating services and advocating for the families, caregivers, children, and youth that she is working with making sure they are all receiving the care they require at the highest level possible. It is truly a privilege to nominate Aimee for employee of the month.



Ann Adams - Bureau of External Affairs

Ann Adams simply wants to help others - all of those who come her way. For 24 years, she has served children and families across Connecticut in various capacities. As Director of the Office of Community Relations, she is the calming, soothing voice at the other end of the phone when a family member, foster parent, community partner or youth calls to express a concern. Due to her efforts, problems are quickly resolved leading to both families - and DCF staff - engaging and collaborating, which leads to the best outcome possible for children. Ann comes to work each day with a never-ending positive spirit and desire to make the workspace, her community, and the world a better place. She has succeeded in all of those endeavors. Ann will soon be

retiring as she is in her last month of work at the Agency. It is hard to describe her legacy and what she has meant to all of us. She is so deserving of this award. Congratulations to one of the best advocates, champions for what is right, and the best people we know!

Bethany Zorba - Behavioral Health Community Services

Bethany has been an integral part of the Children's Mental Health Unit. Bethany has been crucial in the implementation of the Urgent Crisis Centers, a brand-new service type here in CT aimed at diverting youth from the Emergency Dept when they have a behavioral health need. As part of the implementation process, Bethany has been collaborating with our contracted agencies and partners while ensuring that we are also concurrently collecting and evaluating the necessary information to be able to assess this new service. In addition to managing several contracted programs, Bethany has also independently managed the CONNECT grant which DCF was awarded. Through the CONNECT grant, Bethany has worked with community partners to ensure that our CT system of care is accessible to children and their families and is currently working to connect schools to this system of care. She is also a team player and has provided support and guidance to her colleagues, offering her expertise and is willing to help others when needed.



Blanca Roman - Government Relations and Policy

Blanca has done a fantastic job working with other divisions (especially Child Welfare and TSS) to update several policies critical to DCF's mission. She regularly attends meetings with subject matter experts to understand the rationale for policy changes and works collaboratively to ensure policy language is easy to understand and succinct. Her work has been exceptional, even during a particularly difficult time for her. She has persevered and delivered for the Department.

Cynthia Middleton - Juvenile Justice Education Unit

Champions can often be found working in the most challenging settings and helping those who are in the greatest need. This statement applies to the work of Ms. Cynthia Middleton, Pupil Service Specialist for the Juvenile Justice Education Unit at DCF. Cynthia exemplifies many of the qualities that speak to the best work of our unit. Her ability to connect with young people, develop positive and productive relationships and create plans to help reintegrate them into their society have already changed lives. Her willingness to go the extra mile in helping to fill in the many gaps is what makes her an exemplary employee. From waiting for hours outside of a courthouse to ensuring one of her clients makes it to their family in Florida, Cynthia works to seek the best outcomes on a daily basis. What sets Cynthia apart from so many is that she always believes that there is a way



to solve an issue or overcome a problem. As one of the Pupil Service Specialists who work with students at Manson Youth Institution, Cynthia's calm and warm presence has been an essential ingredient in building strong partnerships and collaboration with the Department of Corrections. Having Cynthia in our unit benefits not just the students and families we serve, but also those that work alongside her on a daily basis. We thank you Cynthia for your compassion and dedication and you are so deserving of being our Unit's employee of the month!

Fred North - Bureau of Strategic Planning

Fred North is the nominee for employee of the month from the Bureau of Strategic Planning. He is the "go to" for all things data, state and federal reporting and assists staff in navigating the complex world of understanding the outcomes of our work. That is what Fred does but who he is as a person does not go unnoticed. His positive energy, openness to new ideas and the desire to assist others are some of his best traits and characteristics. The pressures on Fred, especially over the past couple of months, have been elevated. We are so grateful for his expertise, ways of handling the staff, for the countless hours he puts into the work to elevate Connecticut's practice and for his continual positive attitude! Thank you, Fred!

fabulous

Allie Derbacher - Clinical and Community Consultation and Supports Division

Bridgeport Substance Use Specialist Allie Derbacher for Employee of the Month. Allie is a highly valued and respected employee within Region 1. She is known for her responsiveness, knowledge, thoughtful and thorough consultation, and support. She regularly goes out of her way to continue to educate herself to be able to support the office with the ever-evolving substance misuse information and practice. We especially want to recognize her given her exceptional work and dedication regarding a recent complex case. Despite many barriers, she spent countless weeks researching, planning, and advocating for this young man's needs. She was intentional in identifying his strengths and protective factors to build upon, while ensuring his voice was always present. Lastly, Allie's ability to conceptualize and integrate the youth's cultural considerations and inequities that has impacted this young man was exemplary.

