

A Message from Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly



**November is National Adoption Month! On Connecticut Adoption Day, we celebrated 40 children establishing legal permanency, bringing the total number of adoptions this year to almost 350!**

We have put together a first of its kind **Connecticut Adoption Day Collage** in our newsletter to show the many children and families who took part in the day! Take a look!

**THANK YOU** to the tireless efforts of our **DCF staff** at all levels, the **adoptive families, Office of the Attorney General, community partners, children's Attorneys** and others who collaborated to make this day possible!

A special **THANK YOU** to **Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz** who attended adoption proceedings in New Haven!



And of course, the day was made possible by the **Judicial Branch!** A warm **THANK YOU** to **Chief Administrative Judge of Juvenile Matters Tammy Nguyen-O'Dowd** along with the following Judges who took part in Connecticut Adoption Day:

Bridgeport: **Sharon Skyers**

Hartford: **Carla Nascimento**

Middletown: **Thamar Esperance-Smith**

New Britain: **Eric Daniels**

New Haven: **Bernadette Conway, Tara Knight, Lynn Dawson**

Rockville: **Margaret Murphy**

Torrington: **Matthew LaRock**

Waterbury: **Sara Nadim, John Turner**

Waterford: **Barbara Hoffman**

Willimantic: **Nicole Anker**



The day was beautiful and one that showed **the best of DCF**. I saw firsthand the **strength** of our **Child Welfare** system in Connecticut - **We cannot do this work alone!** Collectively, anything is possible!

In my travels around the state, I met **Kenyatta and Lucas**. Most importantly, the **"village"** of loved ones who have poured into these little children and will support them the rest of their



lives.



I saw **Corinna** play with a doll and walk around the courtroom as **Judge LaRock** formalized her adoption while her big brother watched.

With tears in my eyes, I heard **11-year-old Gabriel** address the court. *"I am the star of the show,"* he stated. With great pride, his **adoptive father** looked at him and said, *"You are such*

*an intelligent, kind kid. And thank you for making room in your heart for me as your dad."*



This month's "Spotlight on What's Right" newsletter highlights **Hartford Mayor Arunan Arulampalam and his wife, Liza**, who are adoptive parents. Read how they felt *"called"* to adopt and received so much support during the process they remarked, *"The social workers become like family to you."* See this **public service announcement** the family made to promote foster care and adoption: [Arulampalam's Adoption Journey.](#)

The family also appeared on the DCF monthly WFSB Great Day at 9a segment.

**Thank You** to our media partners from **WTNH, NBC 30, FOX 61, Univision, Hearst CT, CT Mirror, Hartford Courant, New London Day** and the **Waterbury Rep-Am** for covering Adoption Day and supporting DCF!



Watch my interview with **Tom Dudchik** from [WTNH News 8's "Capitol Report"](#). You can fast forward the clip to the 13:35 mark to see my discussion regarding the **target populations for recruitment** and see little **Kenyatta** who made a guest appearance on the show!

Adoption is one form of permanency as **children remaining safely at home is the preferred goal**. This year, we will have **safely reunified over 470 children** with another 225 having guardianship transferred to relatives. Great work!



A shout out one more time to the **October Employees of the Month!** Who has been nominated to receive the **November Award** and described as having *"unwavering commitment," "vital,"* and *"always approachable."* Read on.....



Congratulations to **Chief of Staff Karrol-Ann Brown** who was given the **Community Service Award** from **The New Haven Club of the National Association of Negro Business & Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.**

Speaking of employees, I had great visits this month with the staff from the **Milford Office** and met a special little friend. Traveling up I-91, I then spoke

with the staff at **Solnit North** combined with the **Wilderness School**. You are all doing **AMAZING** work!



Our DCF family has heavy hearts this holiday season as we suffered the loss of **Gina Mangano** from **Region 3 and the Norwich Office**. Described as *"pouring her heart into her work," "a powerful advocate for families,"* and *"an incredible mentor,"* she has left an impactful **legacy** of serving others.

A **Commissioner's Monthly video** will now be provided to keep you updated on Agency operations. Watch November's again here: [Commissioner's November 2024 Video](#)



Once more this month, the **talents of our staff** were seen across the state - and across the country!

**Dr. Stephanie Bozak** and our partners from **CSDE and DMHAS** presented a webinar entitled, *"Protecting our youth: a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention."*

**Betany Zorba** and **Yvette Cortez** along with **Vinny Russo** represented DCF at the **School Based Health Center Conference** while providing valuable resources to community members and professionals.



**Michael Williams** traveled to Florida to participate in the **"Ending the Need for Group Placements Learning Exchange"** - a collective effort by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs and community partners across the nation to ensure **all children grow up with their families** in a safe, supportive home.



At the "**2024 Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Convening**" in North Carolina, **Dr. Nicole Taylar, Dr. Linda Dixon, Latosha Johnson, Elizabeth Hazelwood**, young adult partner **Lisa Ramos** and I took part in seminars and panel discussions with colleagues from across the country on how to most effectively meet the needs of young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

One strength of Connecticut's system is the voice of "parents and youth with lived expertise." We are grateful to **Caregiver Advisory Council** members **Marian Russo, Corrina Martin, Kerry Masseur, Sana Cotton** and **Elizabeth Saez** for traveling to San Diego to participate in the **Quality Parenting Initiative's 2024 National Champions Conference** with the theme, "*Research-Informed Advocacy: Supporting Champions as Change Makers.*" **They truly are change makers!** Elizabeth also took part in a panel discussion related to adolescent autonomy and sleep research.



**Tina Jefferson, Jeanette Blackwell, Beverly Green, Emily Marin, John Lachack, Daniel Reyes, Kim Tait, Kristine Rivera, and Carleen Chisholm** also represented DCF at the conference. But that was not all..... **Sana Cotton** and **Unashamed Inc**, colleague **Shardae Nicolson**, spoke to a national audience regarding their Summer Training Series where adolescents learned how to own their story, use their story for advocacy and not allow others to exploit their experience.



Parent partners **Myke Halpin, Corinna Martin, and Lena Esposito** represented CT DCF as they traveled to the "**New Hampshire Parent Leaders of New England Retreat**" in Manchester, New Hampshire. You represented us well! A special thanks to National Child Welfare Lived Expert (Integration) and Race Equity and Justice Consultant **Dee Bonnick** for all her ongoing support!

Congratulations to **Corinna and Lena** as they received awards for their advocacy work at the **Family Forward Advocacy CT First Annual Advocacy in Action Luncheon!** Congratulations!



**Jackie Ford** along with parent partners - **Debbie Franklin and Ashley May - Williams** - traveled to Framingham, Massachusetts to jointly present at the **"A View From All**

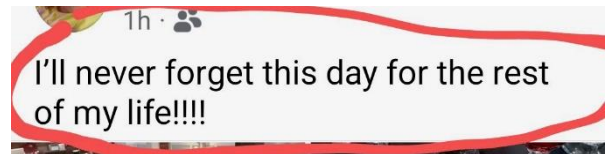


**Sides"** conference. The theme of the presentation - **"Breaking Stigma, Empowering Families: A Revolutionary Approach to Child Welfare"** - focused the importance of creating initiatives to reducing stigma and empowering families involved with child protective services.

Lastly, DCF hosted a celebration at the Wilderness School for **Kid Governor Cristiano Almedia** and his



cabinet members to name the **2024 Connecticut Family Day** Poster Contest winner! Families were also treated to fun activities by the **Wilderness School** staff!



Thanksgiving is upon us, and I wish for you and your families a time of rest and relaxation!

**Thanks for all you do!**