



### **Employee of the Month Awards!**

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

#### **Gregory Hudson - Careline**

It is long overdue that supervisor Gregory Hudson be recognized as an exemplary employee for DCF. Gregory Hudson has served as a Social Work Supervisor with SIU since September 2016. He possesses an extensive knowledge of investigation procedures and policies, which has enabled him to effectively lead his unit in conducting thorough assessments. Mr. Hudson actively collaborates with his team members and organizes case consultations with relevant area office staff, including those in foster care, FFT-Functional Family Therapy, labor relations, legal, and DCF facility consultants, ensuring that all parties involved are adequately informed and supported. Mr. Hudson is known for his dependability, conscientiousness, and professionalism. As a versatile team player, he adeptly handles diverse assignments and ensures that his team members consistently accomplish their work. His strong partnership with SIU members and external professionals is notable; he treats everyone with respect and approaches challenges thoughtfully, always willing to lend a helping hand. Mr. Hudson has covered cases for the Educational Professional Investigations Unit when there has been a need as well as covered home visits and court for his staff. Mr. Hudson has good communication with his staff on all case assignments, his staff are comfortable in sharing with him both personal and professional concerns and has been a strong advocate for their needs always supporting them. Mr. Hudson is known for his commitment, often working late when necessary, and applying critical thinking in case management to ensure safety while upholding professional standards. Additionally, Mr. Hudson plays a crucial role in training new team members about SIU's roles and responsibilities. He readily provides support to the CL SWS team when coverage is needed, earning him the respect and appreciation of all staff.



#### **Jaime Green - Bridgeport Area Office**

Jaime is an Intake Social Worker who has been with the Department for over 25 years. Not only does Jaime have a wealth of experience and is a valued member of the Bridgeport Office's Intake team, but she is also always willing to help out others during case related emergencies,

regardless of her own workload. Last month, when a co-worker was dealing with a high-profile tragedy on her caseload, Ms. Green, realizing the stress that type of situation brings to a worker, voluntarily offered to assist her colleague, who was also simultaneously dealing with another high-risk case. Knowing the case, she was inheriting required a great deal of work and legal intervention, this was a compassionate, helpful, and selfless act. Ms. Green's selfless approach to this job is truly appreciated by her peers, DCF leadership and the clients she services.

### **Rodney Williams - Norwalk Area Office**

The Norwalk office humbly submits the following employee, Rodney Williams, as the employee of the month. Mr. Williams has been with the department since 2006, where he has worked primarily in the Region 1 Investigation Unit. Despite the inherent challenges of investigations, Mr. Williams has been, in short, "the king of morale." He understands the needs of the office and the staff, and he has taken the initiative in organizing the summer outing. Mr. Williams is always available to assist his colleagues in both investigation and treatment but is also a huge advocate for the children and families he serves. In short, Mr. Williams is both loved and respected in the office and Fairfield community. Mr. Williams, endearingly referred to by his peers as "Uncle Rodney" or "Team Player Rodney," is often a light in times of negativity, and he often chooses to see the glass half full instead of half empty and works to pass that energy to not only his clients but his peers.



### **Peter Henry - Waterbury Area Office**

The Waterbury Area Office is happy to nominate social worker Mr. Pete Henry as Employee of the Month. Mr. Henry began his work with the Department at CJTS. He joined Region 5 in 2016 as a SEBAC employee when CJTS was closing.

Mr. Henry's professionalism, engagement skills, and compassion for the work we do is evident in his work both internally and externally. No matter how much Mr. Henry has on his schedule for the day, he will always take the time to provide support to the families he serves by playing a game of basketball with a youth struggling on his caseload, giving time out of his weekends to supervise an event a child in placement is having so their parents are able to attend, or participating in a PPT with a parent to provide additional support.

Mr. Henry's work holds true to the Department's mission of children remaining safely at home and working diligently in getting children in care to return home. Mr. Henry partners with internal and external providers and brings everyone to the table to ensure all of those connected to the family are doing their best to service and support the families effectively. Mr. Henry is always willing to provide a helping hand to his peers and a great promoter of uplifting staff morale. No matter how difficult the day or week may have been, you will always be greeted with a smile by Mr. Henry. Mr. Henry is a true asset to this agency and an example to follow.

### **Elizabeth Wyatt-Freidman - Danbury Area Office**

Elizabeth Wyatt-Freidman is Danbury's candidate for employee of the month. Liz exemplifies teamwork, as evidenced by her commitment to coworkers. She serves as a mentor to social workers new to the Department and to social workers new to their investigation role. She is never hesitant to make herself available to coach and/or assist her peers. Liz is an asset to the office and is often sought after for shadowing experience (i.e., take workers into the field, share her knowledge and perspective, etc.). Liz showcases positive energy and a genuine compassion towards the families served by the Department. She is patient and thoughtful regarding family engagement and has demonstrated a strong commitment to help families establish and maintain meaningful supports to ensure stability. She is relentless in her efforts to connect families to needed resources. She is confident, competent, and comfortable working with challenging families, which is evident in her day-to-day routine. She is not afraid to seek help when deemed necessary and will tirelessly explore/research all possible alternatives to problem solve.

### **Donna Savoia - Torrington Area Office**

The Torrington Office is pleased to nominate Donna Savoia as our employee of the month. As a DCF employee for over 20 years, the last 6 years as an investigation's supervisor, Donna has worked tirelessly as an advocate for the children and families of Connecticut.

Methodical in her approach, in an often stressful and demanding environment, she is a voice of reason and calm, assuring families are respected, assessments are complete, and needs are addressed. Always

maintaining both high expectations and a supportive work environment, Donna is well respected by her peers and the intake workgroup as a whole. As a leader, she is cognizant of staff needs and is willing to roll up her sleeves and step into the fray if the situation demands it, always willing to offer guidance, help and support to the office staff. In addition to her supervisory responsibilities, Donna serves as a liaison to the Early Childhood Collaborative, is a member of the area office CQI team, serves as a back-up CRM facilitator, manages the intake log and is a tri-chair of the Torrington Racial Justice Workgroup. Donna is a true professional and an asset to the Torrington office.



### **Michael Bibens - New Haven Area Office**

I would like to nominate New Haven Office Assistant Michael Bibbens for employee of the month. Michael is currently assigned to support an ongoing services workgroup. Prior to that, he was assigned to support the intake workgroup. Michael, however, does his best to always support all of us in the office, no matter what workgroup he is assigned to. He has an outstanding work ethic and always finds a way to assist, even though his plate may be completely full for the day. He never says he is too busy or can't fulfill the request. The answer from him is always yes. From assisting us with completion of 004's, to e-filing, ensuring service is

sent out for legal work, etc., he not only does it but does it with such speed, accuracy, and positive attitude. We are extremely lucky to have him as part of our team and work family. Thank you for all you do Michael!

### **Deanna Spero - Milford Area Office**

Deanna is a skilled social worker who despite having a full caseload, has been able to manage a case involving a severely medically complex young child for over a year. In addition to attending several routine meetings, she has collaborated well with the family members, DCF nursing staff, DCF Foster Care Division and Engineering Department to ensure this child's needs are met and advocating for him to receive the best quality of care. Deanna has been an informal mentor for her peers and maintains a professional attitude.

### **Gladys Ortiz - Norwich Area Office**

Gladys has been employed by the Department since 5/28/04 and has been a strong advocate for Hispanic/Latine families throughout this time. Gladys has spent the majority of her career in the Norwich Intake Function. She actively participates in the education of her coworkers around the Hispanic/Latine cultural, educating both colleagues and families of the nuances with the culture and language and how they correlate to their interaction with DCF personnel and community providers. Gladys is the first person that will respectfully but passionately advocate for the unique needs of the Hispanic/Latine community. Gladys advocates to be assigned cases of Hispanic/Latine children and families given her knowledge and experience despite this sometimes leading to a heavier workload for her. She is keenly aware that it is in the best interest of the children and families to be able to comfortably communicate with their social workers without the need of a translation service. While dedicated to providing effective communication and service implementation, Gladys's dedication never waivers from child safety. She maintains the highest level of integrity and respect with her interactions with her colleagues, providers, children and families. Statements from her colleagues include: "Gladys is a such a passionate social worker. I can only speak for myself when I say she helps me with visits, phone calls, text messages, and emails. She helps explain cultural differences when I may be culturally incompetent. I have heard her over calls, virtual meetings, and informal meetings advocating for her families all while continuously ensuring their safety and well-being. Gladys works long hours, often without compensation. She is the first to help within the intake (function) and usually the first to respond to "is there a Spanish speaking worker available". Gladys is one of the most compassionate, understanding, and helpful social workers in this office. She has been a great example for me". "Recently Gladys helped me during a removal of 7 children of Hispanic/Latine origin. She was familiar with the case and completely unprompted (and greatly appreciated), stepped forward and helped in contacting two out-of-state Spanish speaking fathers. This was a tremendous help for me and because of her effort both fathers were able to attend the 10-day



OTC hearing and present themselves as resources for their children. She is consistently helping staff every chance she gets and always stands out to me as an example when I think of outstanding social work." I was out on a same day intake response, Spanish speaking, physical abuse case. I had a new interpreter out with me, who had never done a DCF case before. She was petrified, and clearly not appropriately sharing what I needed shared. Mother was extremely combative and spoke a rare dialect of Spanish as she was from a very small town in Guatemala. The family had recently moved to the US and were in the process of immigrating. Once I got to the home, (as we started out at the school) the interpreter told me she could no longer stay with me, got in her car, and left. It was close to 7-8pm, I was stuck at this house, attempting to create a safety plan- now with an interpreter over the phone who was STRUGGLING to communicate with mother. My supervisor contacted Gladys, she came out to support me, she was able to calm mother down, and we were able to put the safety plan into place. She stayed with me for another almost 2 hours.... Truly saved the night and the children's ability to remain at home with their mother." I have had the experience of working with Gladys when I was a social worker and for the past 12 years as MH RRG. Gladys is, frankly, one in a million. She comes to a MH consult prepared, knowledgeable, and presents as a strong advocate for the safety and well-being." Gladys is employee of the month every month! This write up is from her Program Sup. Jenn Wilcox.

### **Aleasis Stainrod - Middletown Area Office**

Aleasis (aka Laci) has made a lasting impact on the Middletown AO since joining the team in November 2023. She jumped right into her role as Secretary 1 and clerical support to the Office Director and Program Supervisors and took no time to learn the office, staff and their needs. She takes initiative, provides feedback and listens to her peers and staff as needed. She is always quick to offer her support and goes above and beyond to ensure the office is running smoothly. Laci presents with a pleasant and cheerful disposition but is also, all business. She's reliable, thorough and patient and we are grateful to have her.



### **Jessica Gonzalez - Willimantic Area Office**

Jessica has been an integral support for the office and more recently for the Program Supervisors. She has been scheduling transferring conferences in alignment with our new Racial Justice Equity Tool for children of color whose family is being transferred to ongoing services. She has created shared logs for the PS team and has been extremely helpful, going above and beyond, managing all the nuances involved. Jessica has also taken the initiative to support staff around the summer outing. She is helping to coordinate the event, and her assistance has been invaluable. We are truly grateful to have such a great partner, who cares about the office and the staff, and tries to make everyone job a little easier!

### **Heather Czerwinski - Hartford Area Office**

Heather Czerwinski consistently shows an exemplary attitude, effort, and work with the families she serves and support. Heather is being nominated due to the collaborative work she has accomplished with the foster care division, specifically with SW Monique Boyd. Heather has taken the time to get to know the children she supports within the role of a permanency worker while strengthening their relationship with the foster families. Heather continues to collaborate with internal and external partners to ensure the children she supports achieve permanency. She has worked to ensure children remain connected to their birth families regardless of the permanency outcome. Her legal work has been exceptional and shows the hard work she has put in on each case. During a CFSR review, her collaboration with SW, Boyd, was noted to have been done so well, that their work ultimately impacted a positive outcome. They worked to maintain consistent communication while supporting a youth and foster father who was struggling with one another along with going through some personal issues. They were able to support both the youth and foster father to stabilize the placement while the Department continued to move toward effectuating the permanency plan of adoption. Their collaboration was an integral part of stabilizing the placement while helping the youth and foster father strengthen their relationship. The most positive outcome occurred--Permanency! They both played a big role in ensuring that their collaboration moved the case forward.

### **Courtney Garvey - Manchester Area Office**

Courtney has worked with the Department for the past 10 years and is currently out posted. Courtney will be recognized and honored by the Lawyers for Children America



in their upcoming 30th anniversary celebration in November 2024 in Hartford, CT. This is the first year that the Lawyers for Children America will be honoring 2 DCF staff, with Courtney being one. Attorneys for the Lawyers and Children America noted working on several cases with Courtney, one of which included many late nights searching for missing children which were eventually located safely in Philadelphia, PA all while managing numerous other demanding cases and achieving permanency for many others." The Lawyers for Children America noted, "As a remarkable staff member and social worker at DCF, you have made it possible for LFCA volunteer attorneys to provide exceptional representation and to achieve well above average outcomes for young people in Connecticut's child welfare system.

### **Ashley Cotto - New Britain Area Office**

New Britain is very excited to nominate Ongoing SW, Ashley Cotto for the employee of the month award. Ashley has worked tirelessly on a very complex case Ashley was praised by the AAG and a family recently for her wonderful work with the family. Ashley has been working with this family since January 2023, having removed the children, moved toward permanency with a relative, then reunified the children ultimately. The AAG noted " Lots of good progress. SW Cotto has been "really great" per mother" in the court memo. Ashley goes above and beyond

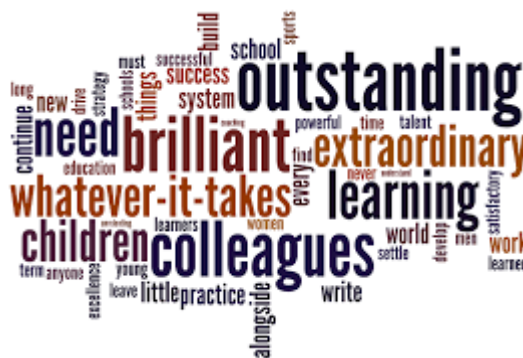
to advocate for her families and in this case was ensuring the youth was enrolled in the proper school upon reunification. Ashley assisted mother at every step and this youth is now placed in the correct setting and doing well, which also helps support the reunification being successful. This case is indicative of the quality work that Ashley provides to all of the families that she serves. Ashley is also a very active member of our Wellness team within the office. She is a valued member and an asset to the office!

### **Christopher Padilla - Meriden Area Office**

The Meriden office is proud to nominate Social Worker Christopher Padilla for the Employee of the Month Award. Christopher exemplifies true teamwork, always eager to assist his fellow social workers while maintaining exceptional care for the families he serves. His positive outlook enables him to effectively engage families, helping them thrive. As an active member of both the Region 6 Fatherhood Engagement Leadership team and the Meriden Wellness team, Christopher consistently contributes ideas and takes initiative to drive progress. Beyond the office, he is deeply involved in his community as an artist and basketball coach. Christopher is a valued asset to the Meriden office, and we greatly appreciate his continuous support and dedication!

### **Amy Sherzai - Health Management/Behavioral Health and Community Services**

Amy is the Clinical Nurse Coordinator for the Medically Complex Training Program. She is responsible for training and certifying all families and caregivers who care for our children with complex medical needs. She works closely with the social workers and nurses in the area offices assisting them with the process. The training is vital to those caregivers who are taking on the responsibility for some of our most vulnerable children. She also makes sure the families in which English is not their primary language, have access to translator and/or translated information. Amy also works with the Training Academy training pre-service social workers. She has worked as an RRG nurse as well as in our congregate care settings, which allows her to have a good perspective of nursing within DCF as well as in the community. For those of you who have been lucky enough to meet and work with Amy, you also know that she is a beacon of light and positivity wherever she goes. She brings such a special energy to any setting and gathering and a sense of humor that can get everyone to smile and laugh and be put at ease. We in the division especially central office are very lucky to be able to work with her. Thank you, Amy!



### **Gustavo Guevara - Bureau of External Affairs**

Gustavo Guevara simply wants to help others. For decades, he has worked in the Office of the Ombudsman now referred to as the Office of Community Relations. Every day, and all day, Gus is a positive spirit around the office. He is the first to raise his hand to help others, ask about our

families and share a funny story. For those children and families that he serves, Gus is responsive, a calm voice during a time of crisis and he works quickly to enhance the image of the Department by resolving problems, answering questions and connecting those in need to the best person to address an issue. Most importantly, Gus leaves those who are in contact with him feeling better, supported, heard and in a better place.

### **Scott Basile - Transitional Supports and Success**

Scott's biggest attribute is his ability to relate to others. He connects with our Wilderness School students, staff and community naturally and comfortably. People feel more at ease in his presence. This characteristic becomes a gift to students and staff looking for support and guidance. His consistency and reliability help ground and anchor the Wilderness School team. Scott can balance a no-nonsense directness with conversations that evaluate nuance. Additionally, Scott appropriately brings a light-hearted sense of humor and playfulness that adds to the buoyancy of our workplace culture. Scott's dedication most recently helped carry the work of the Wilderness School through retirement transitions and the current Wilderness School Team. We are grateful for his reliability and camaraderie.

### **James Terriaca - PRTF (South)**

James, a clinician on the South PRTF Lakota unit, is truly deserving of the Employee of the Month award. He consistently goes above and beyond to ensure the youth in his care receive exceptional support. James steps up whenever needed and always maintains a collaborative, team-oriented attitude. His flexibility and dependability shine through, and his approachable, calm demeanor makes him a reliable presence for both colleagues and families. His work with families stands out, as he advocates for the youth with dedication and creativity, ensuring treatment plans are tailored to meet the unique needs of each child. Always greeting challenges with a smile, James's unwavering positivity is felt by everyone he works with.



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### **Jacqueline Aguilar - PRTF (North)**

There are so many reasons Ms. Aguilar is deserving of this award. Here are just a few, as stated by her coworkers: She is a team player who has a good relationship with staff from all disciplines. She is professional. She is a strong advocate for the youth at Solnit North. She cares! She takes initiative on her shift and helps where needed, such as filling out paperwork in the absence of a Lead CSW. She has a gift when it comes to building professional relationships with the youth that she works with. She submits many activity requests for the youth, and in doing so, has made some great memories for our youth as they not only learned how to fish for the first time, but they have also reeled in their first ever fish! She has leadership qualities!



### **Amy Gorman - Solnit South Hospital**

Amy Gorman an Advanced Clinical Social Worker at Solnit Hospital has been a tremendous asset to the Sachem clinical team. She has demonstrated the ability to align with, join and collaborate with families in a way that validates them while ensuring they are actively involved in their youth's treatment. She is not only emotionally present and supportive to the youth on her caseload (as well as any youth and/or staff she encounters) but fulfills an important clinical role, functioning as a clinical leader and positive example of trauma-informed client care. She has well demonstrated the ability to remain calm and consistently supportive to youth during crisis situations. Amy is dedicated and offers unwavering advocacy for the youth on her caseload. Furthermore, she has collaborated with other team members to develop and implement individualized plans for youth to target specific and challenging behaviors. Amy completes detailed and thorough documentation in all required aspects. She has excellent collaboration both internally (with Solnit team members) and external partners. She is a member of the events committee, working to make sure youth in Solnit care have special opportunities and moments to spend with important people in their lives. She is always willing to give of herself to support her youth, the unit staff (her colleagues), and the hospital facility needs, going above and beyond in supporting the milieu as needed (picking up shifts, staying late, coming in on the weekends). Amy is a strong member of the Sachem Unit clinical team and the Solnit Hospital clinical department. She comes to work daily with a positive and friendly attitude. We are better off because of her presence, compassion, knowledge, skillset, patience, and commitment, to and for this work. Thank you, Amy, for sharing your gifts with Solnit Hospital.

top of the class

### **Brenda Fournier - Fiscal**

Brenda currently works as a Fiscal Administrative Officer and has been with the Claiming team for about 10 years. Brenda Fournier has been an exceptional asset to the team, who consistently goes above and beyond in support of DCF's mission. Brenda brings a high level of expertise in federal claiming, with an undeniable ability to lead others in the understanding of this very complex federal claiming process. In addition to being an expert in her role, Brenda is a champion in agency wide changes. Most recently, Brenda has supported all CT-KIND meetings with providing her recommendations and lending her professional point of views. The Revenue Enhancement Division is extremely thankful to Brenda and appreciates all her handwork.

### **Lydia Santiago - Juvenile Justice Education Unit**

I would like to nominate Lydia Santiago, Administrative Assistant for Juvenile Justice Education Unit (JJEU) for Employee of the Month. Despite being new to the team, Lydia has made an incredible impact from day one. From the moment she joined, JJEU quickly adapted to our workflow and immediately took charge of streamlining processes, improving communication, and providing essential support to the team. Her proactive attitude and organizational skills have not only lightened the workload but also elevated the efficiency of our office. Lydia has

actively engaged in multiple facets of the team's work to provide valuable support across various processes. One key task she's taken on is creating a comprehensive contact list for the school districts across Connecticut, identifying nearly 200 districts that were not already on file. This demonstrates her thorough attention to detail and organizational skills in gathering critical information. Additionally, she is working to deepen her expertise in the STAR assessment, an important tool for evaluating student performance. Her goal is to become proficient enough to support residential facilities with data needs, showcasing her commitment to broadening her skill set and offering meaningful contributions where needed. Beyond her technical contributions, Lydia has also built strong relationships with the entire unit in a short amount of time, fostering a collaborative and positive working environment. Her ability to complete any task quickly and efficiently reflects not only her competence but also her proactive and adaptable approach to work. Whether tackling complex tasks like building databases or supporting assessments, Lydia continues to be an indispensable asset to the team. Lydia's positive energy and professionalism have set a high standard for the entire office, and she has become an indispensable member of our team in a short time. For these reasons, I believe Lydia is an excellent candidate for Employee of the Month and deserves recognition for the immediate and positive impact she has made.

**Genevieve Munoz - Area Office Clinical and Community Consultation and Supports Division**

CCCSD is proud to nominate Genevieve Muñoz, LCSW, Advanced Clinical Social Worker Region 2, for Employee of the Month. Genevieve has been a state employee for the past 10 years, and throughout that time, her impact is immeasurable. She is known for her professionalism, honesty, and thoughtful and thorough consultation. She works to establish a strong foundational understanding to our practices and policies so that she can best help our staff. She brings a wealth of knowledge and support to the New Haven office. "When presented with challenges, Genevieve finds a solution. When solutions are challenged, Genevieve will find a better, new solution. Her calm demeanor and wealth of experience shines through in every case she touches." (PS Gerard Downes). We especially want to recognize her given her exceptional work and collaboration with community partners regarding a complex case involving a youth with opioid use, withdrawal symptoms, history of PTSD, anxiety, and polysubstance abuse. Despite the barriers and gap in substance use treatment for adolescents, she spent countless hours, weeks, and months advocating for this youth and his complex and intensive behavioral health needs. Her investment in our staff and the children and families we serve is truly remarkable. It truly is a pleasure working with her and learning from her.



## **Colleen Drummond - Academy for Workforce Development**

Colleen Drummond has been a Child Welfare Trainer at the Academy for Workforce Development for nearly 4 years. She is a caring and genuine social work supervisor who is often sought out by many. She is an active member of numerous committees including Central Office's DAT, AWD Wellness Team, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Statewide Committee, and DCF's Mentoring Program to name a few. Colleen is an engaging, knowledgeable, patient, and talented individual. She is always willing to lend a hand and will always do research to achieve excellence. Colleen trains numerous curriculums within Pre-Service and In Service. One of her specialties is the Mindfulness Training which she has been able to transform into a brief workshop to support staff in the area offices. She recently supported the Willimantic Area Office's outing in early September 2024 where she held the Mindfulness Workshop and received much praise. Staff found her to be relatable, honest, and engaging. Some of the comments included: "this has been the best speaker at a Summer Outing"; "She was great-she talked to us not at us. She gets it" and "this is exactly what we needed". During this workshop, Colleen provided practical tips and resources for staff. Colleen possesses strong skills in communication, problem solving, and formulating ideas. She is extremely creative and resourceful as it pertains to the trainings she conducts, especially, Making the Most of Your Time. Colleen is committed to the work at DCF and delivers the message with grace. Because of all of this, Colleen is well deserving of Employee of the Month.



## **Tiffany Bacote - Education/Unified School District #2**

Tiffany Bacote has served USD2 Schools for nearly 6 years. Throughout this time, she has demonstrated true professionalism. Tiffany is a respected and relied upon staff member who repeatedly goes above and beyond for the students and colleagues she interacts with. Her ability to assist the school community, in the various roles that she has held, has benefitted not only the Riverview School, but the Solnit South campus as well. Tiffany has taught two different subjects, Career Education and Social Studies. She helped establish a curriculum for Career Ed which focused on student's interests that explored various types of careers, through projects such as vision boards, resume building, and financial literacy activities. Due to some unexpected staffing loses, Tiffany moved into the Social Studies teacher role. Her transition to this content area was seamless. The relationships and rapport that Tiffany builds, with students and staff, are a couple of her greatest strengths. Her flexibility and perseverance to succeed continues to make her an asset for the school, facility, and agency. Tiffany has just recently transitioned into a new role as a Pupil Service Specialist. Her leadership skills and engagement with others continue to provide a positive learning and collaborative environment.

### **Lynn Hebert - Office of Legal Affairs**

The Legal Division is honored to highlight the accomplishments of an attorney who is always available and willing to not only accomplish her own tasks, but to assist her colleagues in any way she can. Attorney Lynn Hebert has a long history of going above and beyond during her tenure with the Department. Most recently she has been a beacon to newly hired paralegals within the unit, offering one-on-one as well as group training sessions focusing on redactions, internal reviews and other duties unique to the paralegal position. She coordinates these trainings and adjusts her in-office days to offer as much support as possible and remains available for questions via TEAMS or phone calls. Attorney Hebert also collaborates with external partners as evidenced by her spearheading the project to upgrade the process for digital requests for confidential case records as well as public, freedom of information records. She exemplifies the values of the agency's mission, honoring the needs of clients by ensuring requests for historical records are provided to former clients of the Department, and their families, who are trying to learn more about their personal histories. Attorney Hebert conducts internal reviews for individuals who are attempting to gain employment but are hindered by placement on the Department's Central Registry. Attorney Hebert reviews these cases to ensure placement decisions are justified and are not unfairly impacting prior clients, especially those of color. Attorney Hebert's efforts benefit not only the Department's clients, but also her colleagues as she provides assistance and guidance in a multitude of areas, from insight on historic agency practice, guidance on navigating technology upgrades to developing new effective and efficient processes, including collaborations with CT-KIND. Attorney Hebert continues to excel as a representative of the Legal Division, ensuring staff are supported and clients receive the best service.

### **Carlos Yrayta - Foster Care Division**

The Foster Care Division has the pleasure of honoring, social worker, Carlos Yrayta. Carlos has 25 years of service with the Department. During this time, Carlos has consistently demonstrated exceptional dedication and commitment to our children and families. Carlos goes above and beyond in his responsibilities. He is a valued team player and actively assists his colleagues. He is always willing to step forward and help when his peers need coverage. You will see Carlos at almost every Foster Care Division event. Carlos not only shows up but works up a sweat ensuring that families are having a great time and their needs are met. Carlos brings a positive energy to the workplace and always has a smile on his face. Carlos is an asset to our agency and deserves to be acknowledged everyday.