



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statewide Child Welfare Award Recipients Announced **Six Honorees Have Shown Exceptional Service to Children in the Foster Care System**

LANSING, MI, October 31, 2016 – Six individuals will be recognized this week by the State Court Administrative Office’s Foster Care Review Board for their outstanding service to children in foster care in Michigan. The Honorable Elizabeth L. Gleicher, Michigan Court of Appeals Judge, will present the 2016 Child Welfare Awards on Thursday, November 3, 2016, at the Sheraton Detroit Metro Hotel in Romulus.

Troy Miller, a foster care specialist with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) South Central Office in Wayne County will be honored as the **Foster Care Worker of the Year**. Mr. Miller received nominations from multiple co-workers, each citing numerous examples of the hard work, dedication, creativity, and professionalism he has demonstrated and in going “above and beyond the call of duty” in his efforts to achieve positive outcomes for the children and families he serves. He was commended by his supervisor for honesty, sincerity, and commitment to providing the highest quality service and support to children and families, always exploring, searching, advocating, and networking for resources to assist them. In addition, it was noted that Mr. Miller has consistently been commended by court officials for his case preparation skills, as well as for successfully advocating, motivating, and supporting parents as they work toward reunification with their children.

William Ladd, with the Michigan Children's Law Center in Wayne County, will be honored as **Lawyer-Guardian Ad Litem of the Year**. Mr. Ladd was nominated by retired 3rd Circuit Juvenile Court referee Jennifer Pilette. Mr. Ladd was commended for over 25 years of strong advocacy for children by providing them with an active voice in their court cases. He received recognition from Children's Rights, a national watch dog organization, for his efforts as "next friend" in a 2010 lawsuit addressing conditions of children within the Michigan foster care system. Mr. Ladd was also noted for his involvement with the Children's Law Section of the State Bar Association as a current council member and past chair. He is one of a handful of Michigan attorneys who has received national certification as a child welfare expert through the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC).

Nancy Dean, Attorney at Law in Mackinac City, will be honored as **Parent Attorney of the Year**. Ms. Dean was nominated by the Honorable Robert J. Butts, Cheboygan County Probate and Family Court, who commended her for her diligent and thorough preparation skills and strong representation of parents, going above and beyond the expectations of the court. Noteworthy was her strong connection to her clients, providing them with encouragement and assistance in solving problems and in overcoming barriers to reunification with their children. It

was noted that Ms. Lucas-Dean is fully involved in all aspects of the case, attending Family Team Meetings and Foster Care Review Board reviews, and is always available to assist her clients. She also serves on the county Child Protection Mediation Steering Committee and has previously served on the Children's Mental Health Court Team.

The **Hon. Robert S. Sykes, Jr.**, Ionia County Probate Judge, will be honored as the **Jurist of the Year**. Judge Sykes was nominated by the Ionia County Foster Care Review Board for his fair, timely, and efficient processing of child abuse and neglect cases. It was noted that he always has the children's best interests in mind while assuring that parents are receiving the support and services needed to give them the best chance possible for reunification with their children. He was commended for his efforts in maximizing parental involvement, a key factor in achieving reunification in a timely manner, while also stressing collaboration among community partners. Judge Sykes was also recognized as a strong advocate for establishing a child welfare system that is able to achieve positive outcomes for all children and families served within the system. To that end, he presently serves on the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, the Michigan Court Improvement Task Force, the Michigan Foster Care Review Board Advisory Committee, the Michigan Child Welfare Judicial Advisory Committee, and the Ionia County Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Glenn and Kim Wing, foster parents in Marquette County, will receive the **Foster Parents of the Year** award. The Wings were nominated by members of Foster Care Review Board 30, with supporting nominations from Senator Tom Casperson, 38th State Senate District, and the Honorable John Kivela, State Representative, 109th State House District. Glenn and Kim were nominated for providing a stable, caring home for 18 years to over 100 children who have required foster care due to abuse and neglect; four of these children have been adopted by the Wings. Their nomination was filled with stories of children and youth, many with severe emotional and behavioral challenges and backgrounds of horrendous abuse, who have thrived and greatly benefitted from the love, safety, and care provided by the Wings. It was noted that a number of youth would have been placed in residential treatment programs if Glenn and Kim had not taken them in and successfully addressed their needs. In addition, the Wings were commended for the support, leadership, and training they provide to other foster parents, as well as for their service on local court committees and the state Foster Care Review Board.

The FCRB, which was created by the Michigan legislature in 1981, serves as a statewide system of third-party review of the foster care system. The program is administered by the State Court Administrative Office, the administrative agency of the Michigan Supreme Court. Citizen volunteers serve on the FCRB's 30 local review boards throughout the state. Local boards review randomly chosen child abuse and neglect cases; the boards assess how these cases are being handled by courts, the Department of Human Services, and private child welfare agencies.

For more information about the FCRB, and for information about volunteering, visit www.courts.mi.gov/fcrb.

