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## **Governor and DCF celebrate nine awardees for their dedication and service to families**

*Putting Families First Awards presented during Family Strengthening Month*

MADISON – Governor Tony Evers and Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson honored nine individuals today at the inaugural 2024 Secretary’s Putting Families First Awards. The awards were presented during a celebration at the State Capitol as part of Wisconsin’s proclaimed month-long recognition of [Family Strengthening Month](#).

“Today’s awards reflect the collaborative work to help further transform our state’s child welfare system into one that uplifts and empowers families,” said Gov. Evers. “The work these individuals do every day is challenging but important to the well-being of communities across the state. We can never thank them enough for showing up and enriching the lives of Wisconsin’s kids and families.”

Recipients of the award were selected based on their leadership, adapting and implementing Family First initiatives, and having a proven record of ensuring the well-being of children and families. This year’s recipients include:

**Parents with Lived Experience:** Deanna Cobun of Rock County; Jonisha Neita of Milwaukee County; and LaMikka James and the Beehive Team of Rock County received recognition for serving as a support to other families who are at-risk or involved in the child welfare system, and for their passion in informing and encouraging system change.

**Community Partners:** Lori Radcliffe and the Dunn County Family Treatment Court Team of Dunn County; Tina Crave of Jefferson County; and Judge Troy Nielsen of Waupaca County received recognition for their strong collaboration with their local child welfare agency and other community partners to keep families together, in home, and for their efforts in supporting and advocating for youth, families, and child welfare system change.

**Child Welfare Professionals:** Carol Pulkrabek of Pepin County; Nicole Parrish of Milwaukee County; and Autumn Boiteau of Jackson County received recognition for their passion to innovative approaches to reduce barriers to keep families together, keeping them connected to their communities and culture.

“Parents, professionals and community partners are all working hard to serve even more families in-home with supports and services they need for success,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “These collaborative efforts deserve to be celebrated because when families thrive, so do our communities. I am extremely proud to honor such caring and compassionate individuals.”

Formerly known as the Caring for Kids Awards honoring child welfare professionals, the Secretary’s Putting Families First awards celebrates county and tribal child welfare workers, key community partners, and parents with lived experience doing exceptional and transformational work for Wisconsin’s children and families. There are many partners who are working to transform the child welfare system to become more family-focused and collaborative in serving more children in-home. To better reflect the partnerships that make this transformation possible, DCF expanded the ceremony to honor social workers, and the partners involved in these efforts.

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