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Burke, Boyd named Legislators of the Year by child welfare advocates

PCSAO also recognizes families, young people

COLUMBUS – State Senator Dave Burke (R-Marysville) and State Representative Barbara Boyd (D-Cleveland) were named Outstanding Legislators of the Year at the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) Annual Conference Oct. 19-20.

The child welfare advocacy group – a membership association of all 88 county public children services agencies – recognized public officials, families and children in the child welfare system, a journalist, a foundation, and county agency staff at award luncheons on both days of the conference. The annual event, which featured 30 workshops and three dozen exhibitors, drew 400 child welfare professionals from across the state. Sponsors included CareSource, Children’s Hospital Association of Ohio, Buckeye Ranch, CGI, Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, and Starr Columbus.

Senator Burke was hailed for his recent work in the Ohio House of Representatives, where as Chair of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee for the state budget process he was instrumental on a number of child welfare/protection issues, including restoration of funds for children fortunate enough to be in the custody of kinship caregivers. “Senator Burke’s personal understanding of child welfare and adoption is amazing,” said PCSAO’s Legislative Director Greg Kapcar in making the award. “His calm, evenhanded, gracious demeanor and logical approach to problem solving served him well as chairman. Ohio’s children and families served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are better off because of his leadership.”

Representative Boyd was saluted for her commitment to securing support for child welfare initiatives even in the face of a debilitating medical condition that kept her at home during much of the budget debate. “Representative Boyd worked across the aisle with leadership, often over the phone, to ensure adequate resources for safe and stable families,” said Gayle Channing Tenenbaum, PCSAO’s Director of Policy and Governmental Affairs.

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Other award winners included:

- **Jewell Cardwell**, columnist for the *Akron Beacon Journal* – Outstanding Journalist of the Year;
- **Casey Family Programs**, the nation’s largest foundation focused entirely on foster care and improving the child welfare system – Outstanding Child Advocate of the Year, accepted by Eric Fenner, former director of Franklin County Children Services and now on staff at Casey;
- **Gayle Channing Tenenbaum** – Dan Schneider Leadership in Training Award from the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program;
- **Nancy Phares**, Lorain County Children Services – Outstanding Child Protection Support Staff of the Year ;
- **Julie Kyer**, Erie County Department of Job and Family Services – Outstanding Child Protection Worker of the Year; and
- **Emily Green**, Franklin County Children Services – Outstanding Child Protection Supervisor of the Year.

PCSAO also honored five “Families of the Year” and five young people for “Rising Up and Moving On” (RUMO). “Because our child welfare mission is safe and stable families, the family and RUMO awards are always the highlight of the conference,” said PCSAO Executive Director Crystal Ward Allen. “The dedication and resiliency shown by our awardees is inspiring. Whether they are families opening up their homes to foster children, adopted children, or relatives, or whether they are young people working to overcome the adversity of being in the system, they exemplify a sense of personal strength from which we all can learn.”

Rising Up and Moving On award winners for 2011:

- **Maria**, 19, of Stark County, now an independent college student after six years in foster care who is caring for her younger brother;
- **Julia**, 19, of Trumbull County, who has overcome multiple foster placements and a family history of substance abuse;
- **Merri**, 20, of Stark County, who is excelling in college and advocating for her own child after years in foster care;
- **Cody**, 18, of Sandusky County, who left behind criminal activities and life in a group home to be adopted by his Sea Cadets captain and his wife; and
- **Janel**, 18, of Montgomery County, who left behind a childhood of neglect to become a scholarship student and committed young mother.

The youth received proclamations from the Governor and their legislators along with a modest cash award from PCSAO.

The 2011 Families of the Year:

- **Tony and Barbara Crump** of Cuyahoga County, who are raising their two grandchildren;
- **John and Linda Gingerich** of Summit County, who have fostered seven children in six years;
- **Natalia Marshall** of Guernsey County, an immigrant who overcame domestic violence to care for her biological children;
- **John and Cindy Milligan** of Guernsey County, who have adopted two children and fostered sibling groups and families, including Natalia Marshall and her children; and
- **Lisa Newman** of Hardin County, providing kin care for her three grandchildren.

Additional biographical information about the award winners and photos are available on request.