



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2015

CONTACT: Jenn Petion

Director, Community & Govt. Relations, PSF
Jenn.Petion@pfsf.org
352.359.8169

Allison North Jones

Communications Director, FCC
850.320.6167

Florida Coalition for Children Foundation Honors Local Child Advocates

Orlando, Fla – The Florida Coalition for Children Foundation’s (FCCF) annual awards were presented last Wednesday to child welfare professionals, advocates and legislators during a lunch reception hosted in Orlando. The awards reception was held at the closing of the Foundation’s 2015 Annual Conference, where more than 600 attendees participated in continuing education courses, networking events and presentations.

FCCF’s annual awards are a cornerstone of the organization and are presented each year at the annual conference. More than 120 nominations were received this year from the organization’s 67 members. A committee then chose the 16 award winners, which included three local honorees.

The Foundation is the education, training and research arm of the Florida Coalition for Children. Each year the organization holds a conference where those who work in the field of child welfare as well as advocates and legislators have the opportunity to learn, network and be recognized for their hard work.

“The dedication of these individuals is an inspiration to our community, our state and the nation,” said Kurt Kelly, CEO of the Florida Coalition for Children. “It is so important to recognize our frontline workers and provide them with every opportunity to continue learning and sharing best practices to ensure we are protecting the children and youth in our care.”

In addition to the nominees, four staff from Partnership for Strong Families were selected as Presenters for the conference, including CEO Stephen Pennypacker, Melinda Sczepanski, Shinlay Rivera and Jenn Petion.

“We congratulate our local winners for these prestigious statewide awards,” said Stephen Pennypacker, CEO of Partnership for Strong Families. “They represent a dynamic, quality workforce serving our community’s most vulnerable children and families, and we are proud of the work they do that earned this recognition.”

Local 2015 Florida Coalition for Children Awardees:

Case Manager of the Year Award - Francisco Garcia, Family Care Counselor, Providence Human Services, under contract with Partnership for Strong Families

Lighting the Way Award - Lauren Brown, Adoption Program Supervisor, Children’s Home Society, under contract with Partnership for Strong Families

Support Staff of the Year Award - Melanie Mitchell, Family Service Facilitator, Partnership for Strong Families

Additional Local Nominees Who Were Recognized but Not Awarded:



Foster Parent of the Year Award - Amanda Williams, Partner Family, Partnership for Strong Families

Lighting the Way Award – Robert Edelman and Village Counseling Center

Case Manager of the Year Award – Cheriese Brown, Family Care Counselor, Providence Human Services, under contract with Partnership for Strong Families

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Partnership for Strong Families is the lead community-based care agency for Florida Judicial Circuits Three and Eight, including Alachua County. PSF is contracted by the Florida Department of Children and Families to deliver comprehensive child welfare services to children who are victims of abuse and neglect. Partnership for Strong Families also works with at-risk families to prevent child abuse and to decrease the risk of children entering the foster care system. PSF serves more than 5,000 children in 13 counties annually.

The **Florida Coalition for Children Foundation** is the education, training and research arm of the Florida Coalition for Children. The primary educational activity of the Foundation is their annual conference, which is the premier child welfare professional development event in Florida. The primary research interests of the Foundation include workforce development and performance measurement. For more information visit FLChildren.org for more information.