



Comanche County
Health Department

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Child Abuse Prevention Award Winners Announced

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) recognized six outstanding leaders in child abuse prevention during a ceremony Tuesday at the State Capitol. Individuals and organizations were honored for their efforts, which demonstrated significant and outstanding commitment and dedication to child abuse prevention.

The award recipients are listed below:

Patty DeMoraes-Huffine - Mary Ellen Wilson Award

Oklahoma CLICK for Babies Campaign/Period of Purple Crying Program - Outstanding Child Abuse Prevention Program

Denise Howard - Julie L. Bonner Nurse Award

Melissa Griffin - Marion Jacewitz Award

Jo Houston - Outstanding Home Visitor Award

Senator A.J. Griffin - Outstanding Legislator Award

Beth Martin is the interim director of the OSDH Family Support and Prevention Service. She said it is important to recognize extraordinary efforts made in the state on behalf of children.

"Child abuse and neglect is a public health issue, and the strategies to combat it must be provided on a continuum from individual services to policy changes," said Martin. "These outstanding award recipients represent that continuum by exhibiting exceptional work from policy makers to state agency leadership to community implementation."

Mary Ellen Wilson Award Patty DeMoraes-Huffine has devoted her career to the prevention of child abuse and the strengthening of families in the Latino community since 1994. She started as a family support worker in the first home-based parenting support program for the Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA). Patty has demonstrated a great capacity for leadership in securing funding and bringing several evidence-based programs to the Latino community. She continues to educate communities about what is considered child abuse and neglect, and how to report it.

Outstanding Child Abuse Prevention Program The Oklahoma CLICK for Babies Campaign/Period of Purple Crying Program is a voluntary hospital-based effort which provides materials and requires fidelity in providing education to new parents. This education is critical to ensure parents are aware that all babies go through a period of increased crying, known as the period of purple crying, in early infancy. Soothing and coping methods are included for new parents so they may be prepared and know what resources are available to them. The CLICK for Babies Campaign requested knitters and those who crochet to make purple baby caps. The caps are provided through the hospitals along with educational materials connecting families with the program. In 2017, the program received nearly 65,000 caps from almost 2,800 donors.

Julie L. Bonner Award Denise Howard has been with Children First, a nurse family partnership program, for 12 years. She has been helping families create safe, healthy, nurturing environments for their children. Howard provides support and resources to clients even after they have aged out of the program. She collaborates with other professionals, when appropriate, to provide the best possible services.

Marion Jacewitz Award Melissa Griffin has spent the last five years as Oklahoma's program manager for Project LAUNCH, a federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The purpose of the grant is to promote the wellness of young children ages birth to 8 by addressing the physical, social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral aspects of their development. Melissa has worked diligently to promote state level policy and practices that support in an early childhood system of care.

Outstanding Home Visitor Award Jo Houston has been making a difference in the lives of families at Parent Promise for four years. She has multiple families on her caseload who have been with her since she began her work with Parent Promise. She strives to be culturally sensitive and respectful to all families; having a genuine interest in learning more about the families' heritage, customs and home countries.

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Houston is keenly aware that actively involving more people to rally around the child makes it more likely the child will be successful in school, relationships and life.

Outstanding Legislator Award Senator A.J. Griffin has advocated for youth both in the private sector and during her tenure as a state senator. Since taking office in 2012, she has held leadership positions that have resulted in a number of family-friendly bills and laws. She is recognized as a state expert on child abuse and is an advocate for improving public policies that benefit children. She has authored legislation supporting children who have aged out of the foster care system, protecting children from sex offenders, reducing recidivism among youthful offenders, and recent legislation that would create a task force on trauma-informed care for children and youth.

EDITORS – Please note photos attached to this email. See below captions:



Patty Demoraes-Huffine (center) is pictured with Health and Human Services Secretary Steve Buck (left) and Interim Commissioner of Health Tom Bates (right).



Members of the CLICK for Babies Campaign team requested knitters and those who crochet to submit purple caps for babies in hospitals to educate parents about the PURPLE period of crying.



Denise Howard (center) is pictured with the parents of Julie Bonner who was a nurse and empowered parents to care for themselves while creating a healthy environment for their children. Howard was the recipient of the Julie L. Bonner Award.



Melissa Griffin (center) is pictured with Health and Human Services Secretary Steve Buck (left) and Interim Commissioner of Health Tom Bates (right).



Jo Houston was acknowledged with the Outstanding Home Visitor Award. (Not in attendance at the ceremony)





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Sen. A.J. Griffin (center) is pictured with Health and Human Services Secretary Steve Buck (left) and Interim Commissioner of Health Tom Bates (right).

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