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Award Winners for Child Abuse Prevention Efforts Announced, April 12 ***“It’s Your Turn to Make a Difference for a Child”***

The State Interagency Child Abuse Prevention Task Force (ITF) recognized outstanding child abuse prevention professionals and programs in Oklahoma at the ***Child Abuse Prevention Day at the Capitol*** on Tuesday, April 12. The 2011 award winners are: New Beginnings Program in Midwest City for the Outstanding Program Award; Jennifer Hunter with the Oklahoma Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association of Oklahoma City for the Marion Jacewitz Award; and The Honorable Judge Michael D. DeBerry, Associate District Judge of the District Court of McCurtain County, for the Outstanding Elected Official Award.

“The ITF award recipients are all fine examples of collaborative efforts to strengthen families. It’s exciting to have this opportunity to shine the spotlight on people and programs who are making a big difference for Oklahoma’s children,” said Interagency Child Abuse Prevention Task Force Chair, Maggi Hutchason.

The Outstanding Program Award winner is **The New Beginnings Program in Midwest City**. This program addresses the three most cited risk factors for child abuse which are poverty, lack of social support, and being young and unprepared for parenting. Since 1988, this alternative education program has offered programs and services through the Mid-Del School District to assist teen mothers in grades 10 – 12 by teaching all of the participants alternative ways to manage stress, develop realistic expectations for their children, and show them appropriate non-abusive child management techniques and parenting skills. In addition to offering a safe environment to learn and recover credits so that they can finish their high school education, they are also given a chance to practice the parenting skills they’ve learned as they work hands on in the school’s child development center. The school’s child care facility is reserved for program participants to encourage them to finish their education. Studies have shown that completing school is one of the best ways to avoid poverty. The New Beginnings Program works hand in hand with many community agencies by hosting various speakers throughout the year. For example, the YWCA provides presentations to the mothers about domestic violence and its impact on children. They also take the students to Rose State College for a tour every semester in hopes of broadening their horizons while emphasizing the importance of higher education.

The Marion Jacewitz Award winner is **Jennifer Hunter** with the Oklahoma Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association of Oklahoma City. Hunter has been involved with Child Abuse Prevention Day at the Capitol and Child Abuse Prevention Month activities for at least two years. She created the art work for the Blue Ribbon Tree public awareness campaign that has been in use by the Child Abuse Prevention Month Task Force. Additionally, she created a children’s coloring sheet based on the Blue Ribbon Tree public awareness campaign image. She has helped with all of the graphic arts materials used by the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) for promotion of the Child Abuse Prevention Day at the Capitol and Child Abuse Prevention Month events. Hunter helped create the Save-the-Date cards for Child Abuse

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Prevention Day at the Capitol and helped with all of the marketing pieces. She served on the Trail Of Prevention and E-blast/Child Abuse Prevention Challenge and performed other activities through the OSDH to help reduce child abuse in Oklahoma.

The Outstanding Elected Official Award winner is **The Honorable Michael D. DeBerry, Associate District Judge of the District Court of McCurtain County.** Judge DeBerry has devoted his entire career to providing the babies, children, and parents of McCurtain County with the support and encouragement needed to reach their full potential in life. Judge DeBerry makes himself available for the Child Welfare and Protective Services whenever he is needed, even if it is in the middle of the night. Nothing is more important to him than the safety of children. He has jurisdiction over all deprived children cases, protective orders, domestic cases, juvenile cases and an array of other assigned cases, including hearing cases on the protection of adults from abuse and neglect.

Judge DeBerry ensures that his staff receives continuing education about the latest laws regarding children and that parents understand the importance of parenting classes to help them provide a safe and loving environment for children. His decisions always revolve around the child's safety. He is a graduate of University of Oklahoma College of Law receiving his Juris Doctorate in 1969. He is a member of the Oklahoma Bar Association (OBA) and has been a Trustee of the Oklahoma Bar Association Foundation, a member of the Professional Responsibility Tribunal, an Associate Bar Examiner and has served on the Board of Governors of the OBA. He currently is chairman of the Oklahoma Bar Law School Committee, a member of the Bench and Bar Committee, and is a Sustaining Fellow of the Oklahoman Bar Foundation. He is active in the community as treasurer of the Idabel Masonic Lodge, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Idabel Chamber of Commerce, and the Idabel Warrior Club. He has served as president of the McCurtain County Bar Association, Chairman of the Administrative Council and Chairman of the Ushers with the First United Methodist Church.

The State Interagency Child Abuse Prevention Task Force honors people and organizations that demonstrate significant and outstanding commitment and dedication to child abuse prevention activities. The membership, as prescribed by law, is appointed by the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) and is composed of 17 members committed to preventing child abuse.

For more information about the award recipients, their programs, or the how you can get involved in child abuse prevention activities, contact the OSDH Family Support and Prevention Service at (405) 271-7611.

Note to Editors: Photos of Award Winners Follow

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The Outstanding Program Award

New Beginnings Program in Midwest City pictured from left to right: Debbie Neugent, Principal of the technology center; Sonya Fox, Director of New Beginnings and teacher of the Early Care portion; and Teresa Widick, teacher of the academic portion of the program.



The Marion Jacewitz Award

Jennifer Hunter, CASA Association, Oklahoma City



The Outstanding Elected Official Award

The Honorable Michael D. DeBerry

Associate District Judge of the District Court of McCurtain County

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