



Children's Bureau

2021 ADOPTION EXCELLENCE AWARDS





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Family Contributions



Liz Benstead and Ashley Garcia



- Liz is an adoptive parent and middle school service-learning teacher who has used her professional and personal experiences to support permanency for teens.
- Ashley is an active youth advocate who has used her voice and personal story to raise awareness and support other youth in foster care.
- Volunteers for the AdoptUSKids National Speakers Bureau since 2016.
- Participated in multiple high-profile national and local media events supporting adoption from foster care, including the original podcast “Navigating Adoption: Brought to you by AdoptUSKids”.
- Implemented and launched the “Suitcases of Hope” program dedicated to providing duffle bags to youth entering the foster care system.



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Individuals/Professionals

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April Dinwoodie



- Nationally recognized thought leader and advocate on adoption and foster care who is committed to improving the lives of everyone in the extended family of adoption through research, education, and advocacy.
- Developed and hosts the podcast, *Born in June, Raised in April: What Adoption Can Teach the World!* that facilitates an open dialogue about identity, family, and differences of race, class, and culture.
- Former Chief Executive of the Donaldson Adoption Institute, the Founder of *AdoptMent*, a mentoring program that matches youth in foster care with adopted adults and Executive Director of *Transracial Journeys*.
- Key contributor to three major national adoption grants.



Dr. Sharonlyn Harrison



- Since 2005, Dr. Sharonlyn Harrison has been coaching and mentoring emerging leaders across the nation with a hope of increasing the numbers of minority leaders in child welfare, with a particular emphasis on adoption.
- Designed and launched the Minority Adoption Leadership Development Institute (MALDI) at Spaulding for Children and the Minority Professional Leadership Development Program (MPLD) at AdoptUSKids, which has impacted more than 100 mid-level managers in leading change in states across the nation.
- Assisted Spaulding for Children with evaluation, kept programs on track and ensured they were on cutting edge of innovation.



Maci Kean



- Active volunteer of the AdoptUSKids Speakers Bureau.
- Youth advocate for the state of Florida, ChildNet, Forever Families and the Dave Thomas Foundation.
- Volunteer for the Broward County Heart Gallery.
- Participated in multiple national and local media activities including the “Navigating Adoption: Brought to you by AdoptUSKids” original podcast, a PSA for the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign, and a National Adoption Month speaker and panelist.
- Committed to pursuing excellence on behalf of adoption, permanency, family, and youth waiting in foster care.



Melissa Otero



- Dedicated her career in media and advertising to raising public awareness for adoption and foster care and specifically the need for more foster and adoptive parents.
- Guided the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign in partnership with the Ad Council since the Campaign's inception in 2003.
- Developed the national AdoptUSKids Speakers Bureau that highlights the voices of youth and families with lived experience with foster care and adoption. The Speakers Bureau currently has more than 100 volunteer speakers.
- Developed capacity building opportunities for states through localization of the national adoption recruitment campaign materials.



Brenda “Lynn” Bertrand



- Served with the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services for more than 28 years most recently as the Adoption Unit’s Area Social Work Supervisor.
- Supervised the completion of almost 300 adoption in her region in the last 3 years.
- Developed new approaches to achieve permanency in a timely manner for children and youth.
- Developed key relationships across systems to achieve permanency for children and youth.



Bonni Goodwin



- Statewide Coordinator of Adoption Preservation Services with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division, and a Program Manager in the Center for Child Welfare Training and Simulation at the University of Oklahoma.
- Provided training and consultation support specifically on adoption competent mental health services for child welfare workers, as well as mental health practitioners across the State of Oklahoma.
- Completed extensive case consultations with both child welfare and mental health providers with the Post Adoption Services Unit.
- Conducted trainings with leaders of community mental health services with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health about adoption competent mental health.



Ronya Faulkner



- Director of Training and Professional Development for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services with more than twenty-five years of child welfare experience and has spent her entire career seeking to improve the lives of families and children.
- Used innovation and technology to meet the training needs of families when the state served as the pilot site for the implementation of the CORE Teen Curriculum.
- Led the piloting and implementation for the state of Tennessee and arranged for the development of a computer lab where families could come for technology support.
- Developed statewide training tracts and automated tracking of resource family training. Successfully used data to drive change in the state and has been responsible for the inclusion of resource families in the delivery of training.



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Child Welfare/Judicial Systemic Change

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Adoption Support for Kentucky (ASK) Virtual Interaction Program



- Award-winning program that has been serving foster and adoptive parents for nearly two decades through peer-led support groups and training initiatives.
- Program established to prevent pre-adoption disruptions and post-adoption dissolutions by reducing caregiver stress and increasing parental competence through services.
- Trainings and support groups provided through the ASK program were offered virtually. This allowed foster and adoptive parents from all parts of the state to attend ASK-VIP trainings and support groups regardless of their location and from the comfort and safety of their own homes.
- Launched specialized support groups serving LGBTQ+, transracial, and single foster and adoptive parents.

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Destination Family



- Dedicated to achieving permanency and using thorough efforts to explore permanency options for youth.
- Used multiple focused and creative strategies to achieve permanency for youth.
- Utilized a relational rather than clinical model for working with youth.
- 70 percent of youth achieved permanency through adoption or reunification.



Congratulations!





**2021
NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH EVENT
“Every Conversation Matters”**

