



# Children's Bureau

## 2020 ADOPTION EXCELLENCE AWARDS



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2020  
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# Family Contributions

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# Terri DeMarco



- Adoptive parent to five children who inspired her volunteer work to find support and services for other foster and adoptive parents.
- Developed FAMCare mission with her church, Discovery to provide support, resources, and respite to other foster and adoptive parents.
- Trained Discovery ministry staff and volunteers on caring for children who have experienced trauma.
- Provided “Empowered to Connect” workshops in her community.
- Volunteer for Refresh conference in Washington state.

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# Ramona Graham



- Foster and adoptive parent.
- Advocate Coordinator for CASA Jefferson County in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Current volunteer for the AdoptUSKids speakers bureau.
- Participated in multiple high-profile national and local media events supporting adoption from foster care.
- Ramona is in the process of establishing a 501(c)3 organization in partnership with other adoptive parents with the hope of supporting and advocating for adoptive families nationwide.

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# The Hill-Jordan Family



- Foster and adoptive parents.
- AdoptUSKids speakers bureau volunteers.
- Participated in several high-profile national and local media events, including the 2019 National Adoption Month Celebration, and the National Adoption Call to Action Youth Panel.
- Created support for online communities including the Foster Care and Adoption Life Community Support Group to help other foster and adoptive parents.
- In the process of establishing a 501(c)3 organization that will support teen boys who need extra support while in high school.

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# Individuals/Professionals

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# Alicia Groh

- Child Welfare Program Specialist in the Policy Division of the Children's Bureau where she developed regulations to implement federal child welfare laws and recommendations to congressional offices.
- Executive Director of Voice for Adoption where she provided strategic leadership on special needs adoption and child welfare policy.
- Independent consultant, writer, speaker, and coach on a wide-range of topics including, leadership, advocacy, and child welfare systems change.
- Applied gold standard principles and practices from other areas of discipline for use by child welfare professionals through the development of multiple publications and presentations.
- Provided consulting services with her unique skill set to several organizations including, AdoptUSKids, NACAC, Stewards of Change, the Dave Thomas Foundation, and the Capacity Building Center for States.

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# La Tika Jeffery

- Former youth in foster care who aged out at 18 and was adopted as an adult at age 21.
- Current member of the AdoptUSKids speakers bureau.
- Leader in several advocacy and media engagements supporting adoption from foster care including, youth panels, media interviews, webinars, and national media interviews and events.
- Mentor with the YA (Youth Advocate program) where former youth from foster care mentor other youth in care.
- Assists the state of Virginia with PRIDE/kinship training.

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# Melinda Lis

- Founded HuTech, a non-profit that developed innovative programming for child welfare involved families in IL.
- Special Assistant to the Executive Director with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
- Served as the Project Director for the Quality Improvement Center for Adoption/Guardianship Support and Preservation and Director of the National Resource Center for Adoption with Spaulding for Children.
- Assisted with the development of TAPP, the foster care training in Florida.
- Project Director for the National Training and Development Curriculum Project.
- Foster and adoptive parent who has truly demonstrated her commitment to permanency for children youth in all aspects of her life.



# Jane Morgan



- Former State Adoption Manager in Oklahoma where she developed federal grants that improved permanency rates for children.
- Founding Member of the National Association of State Adoption Programs (NASAP).
- Served as the National Adoption Specialist with the Children's Bureau where she led national efforts to implement the Adoption and Safe Families Act and developed the multi-faceted AdoptUSKids project.
- Former Director of Capacity Building Division with the Children's Bureau where she was responsible for developing the large and extensive training and technical assistance structure that exists today to support states, territories, and tribes across the nation.
- Spearheaded the national Adoption Call to Action initiative to mobilize states around an increase in permanency for waiting children.

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# Darcy Olsen

- Foster and adoptive parent.
- Founded Generation Justice to advocate for children in care and assist the Arizona child welfare system.
- Established Children's Law Clinic as part of Generation Justice to provide legal assistance to children to protect their rights.
- Author and speaker to raise awareness about children in foster care.
- Generation Justice has helped a multitude of bills that streamline processes for children to achieve permanency, including teens.

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# Kervin Olmeda Torres



- Caseworker with the El Paso County Department of Human Services.
- Utilized an array of strategies including the child-centered approach of recording videos via zoom featuring youth and their team having a conversation so they may be portrayed beyond what is just written about them.
- Provided tailored approaches to each youth based on their unique needs with the goal of never giving up on any child/youth.
- Supported family and youth to ensure permanency.
- Collaborated with multiple team members to ensure no youth leaves care without permanency.



# Aria Williams



- Former youth in foster care adopted as a teen.
- Current member of the AdoptUSKids speakers bureau.
- Speaker and advocate on a national stage for multiple opportunities supporting adoption from foster care including an Adoption Summit panelist, a media tour, webinars, and blogs.
- Used her experience and voice to inform and advise child welfare professionals on agency and individual worker practices that empower youth to participate fully in their own permanency planning.
- Provided child welfare professionals with new and innovative strategies solutions for teens in care based on her personal experiences.



# Child Welfare/Judicial Systemic Change

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## Older Child Matching Initiative (OCMI)

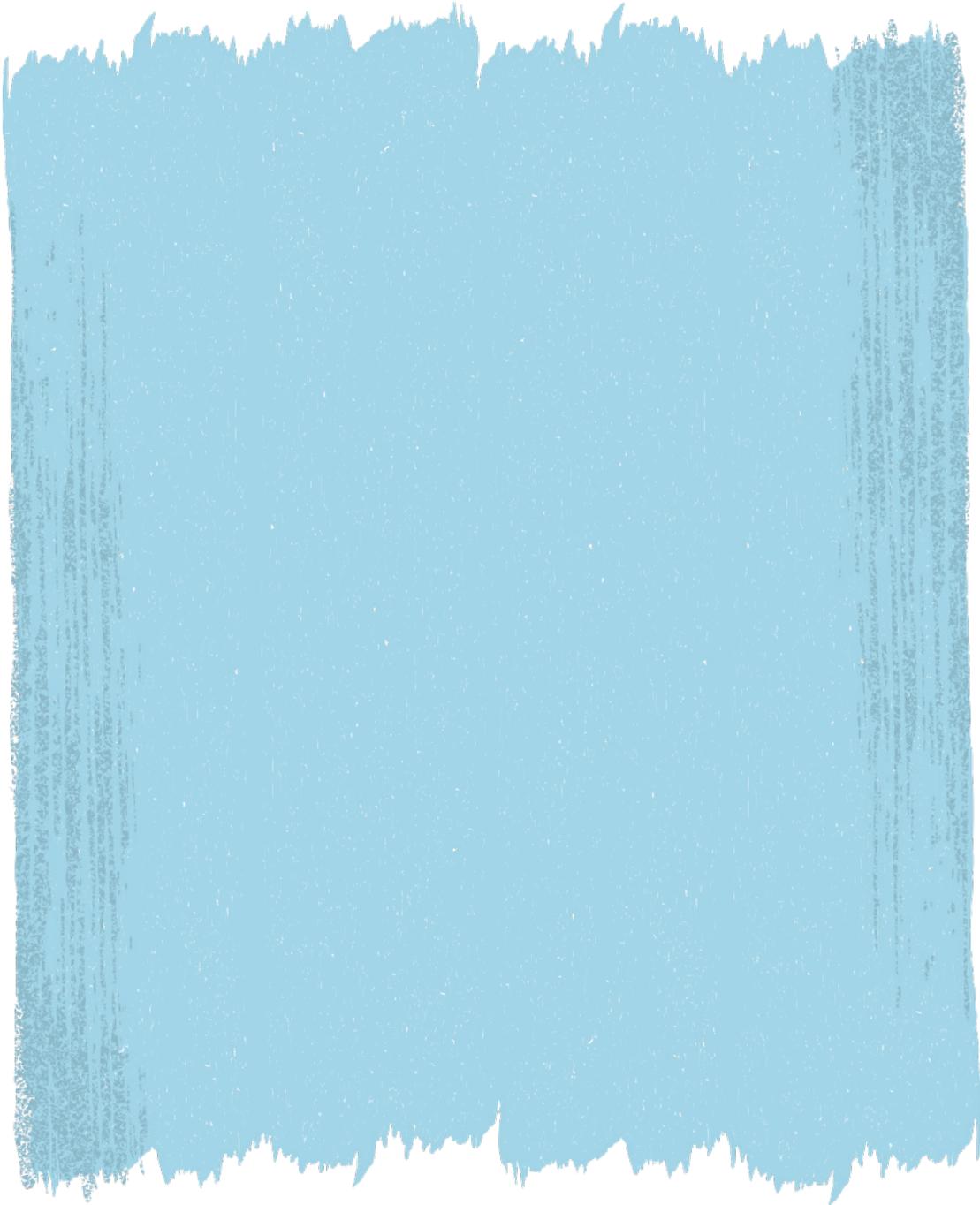


- Created in order to achieve permanency and identify avenues toward permanency for older youth.
- Developed new methods for recruitment, identifying systematic barriers, and exploring solutions.
- Nearly 200 youth have achieved permanency through their involvement with the OCMI.
- Addressed barriers for specific cases and then created awareness of barriers for all children and youth moving to permanency.
- Served as leaders for youth, as well as among other CSR agencies, allowing other workers to shadow and learn from their experiences providing statewide knowledge and benefits.



# Congratulations!





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## NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH EVENT

