



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Foster, Adoptive Parents Honored at Frankfort Event

Families recognized for permanent, transitional care of children

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 9, 2019) - Governor Matt Bevin and officials within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) and the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) recently honored several families from across the state for their service as adoptive and foster parents to some of the state's most vulnerable children.

Gov. Bevin recognized the families for providing stability to children in foster care.

"I truly could not thank you enough, especially to those for whom it's your life calling. We're grateful to be able to honor you," he said.

Bevin told the honorees that for children in a time of transition, "you're what stands in the gap, to stand in place for and to unconditionally be there for them. That's what makes all the difference in the world."

"The trajectory that you put these kids on, the difference that you make in their lives cannot be overestimated. It really cannot," he said.

DCBS Commissioner Eric Clark praised the families for their limitless devotion.

“These parents are heroes of the Commonwealth,” he said. “They help vulnerable children grow and flourish during a difficult time of transition. But most of all, they provide unconditional love so children can learn to love again and blossom into the people they were meant to be. We honor them for their commitment to family and the future of these children.”

Families from nine service regions, as well as a Foster Family of the Year and an Adoptive Family of the Year, were recognized at a Governor’s Mansion reception. All were selected and honored for their dedication and commitment to caring for children in custody of DCBS due to abuse and neglect, or for making the commitment of adoption.

Chris Johnson, Special Advisor in the Governor’s Office of Faith and Community Based Initiatives and a foster and adoptive parent, commended the parents for staying strong throughout many challenges.

“These foster and adoptive parents exemplify the best of a group that is committed to making a tough transition easier for some children, and for giving a ‘forever family’ to others,” Johnson said. “Because of these moms and dads, so many children don’t have to be afraid. They don’t have to worry about where they will sleep each night or what they will eat. They are safe and surrounded by unconditional love.”

Johnson and his office have partnered with the Orphan Care Alliance to launch Uniting Kentucky, an initiative that engages the faith community, local government, and nonprofit organizations to empower Kentucky families to support foster care and adoption.

Clark said safe reunification is always the top priority for DCBS staff and partners, and foster parents meet critical needs for children during a time of profound transition.

“Saying ‘thank you’ to these parents is just a start to recognize them for the comfort they give both the children and their birth families during foster care and on the threshold of permanency,” Clark said.

More than 9,800 children are in out-of-home care in Kentucky. Learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent at <https://prdweb.chfs.ky.gov/kyfaces> or call 1-800-232-KIDS (5437).

Here is a list of parents who were recently honored:

- **Adoptive Family of the Year: Charles and Stephanie Helton:** Corbin (Whitley County, Cumberland Region)
- **Foster Family of the Year: Jeremy and Virgie "Nickiey" Caudill:** Grayson (Carter County, Northeastern Region)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Cumberland Region – Foster: Brandon and Jennifer Hovious** -- Elkhorn (Taylor County)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Eastern Mountain Region – Foster: Price James and Melissa Carol Cole** -- Beattyville (Lee County)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Jefferson Region – Foster: Alfredia Pritchard** -- Louisville (Jefferson County)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Northeastern Region – Foster: Mary Jo and Steven Shepherd** -- Mayslick (Fleming County)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Northern Bluegrass Region – Foster: Megan and Mia (Tomius) Neal** -- Burlington (Boone County)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Salt River Trail Region – Foster: Lori and Drew Williams** -- Elizabethtown (Hardin County)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Southern Bluegrass Region – Foster: Candace Tyra** -- Lexington (Fayette County)
- **Outstanding Service Recipient, The Lakes Region – Foster: Tiffany and Trace Croft** -- Benton (Marshall County)

- **Outstanding Service Recipient, Two Rivers Region – Foster: Taylor Tucker**
-- Bowling Green (Warren County)

Additional information is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/>.

-30-

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.

