



THE 30TH ANNUAL | JANUARY 11-13, 2023

CHILDREN'S LAW INSTITUTE

THE FUTURE WE NEED NOW

CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY OF TRUST
TO BUILD OUR SYSTEM OF CARE

2023 EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

BIO:

Kate Bunch is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) in the state of New Mexico. She is also a Registered Play Therapist Supervisor (RPT-S), an Endorsed Infant Mental Health provider (IMHE-III) and EMDRIA Approved Consultant. She has engaged in continuing education around the treatment of trauma through somatic, attachment and multidisciplinary approaches. Kate has used her training to support children and adolescents regain trust in their attachments to caregivers and families to develop common goals and communication strategies.

Kate utilizes a systems approach when working with individuals and families to support their goal attainment. She is passionate about helping children and adolescents heal from trauma while working within their interpersonal relationships with caregivers. Kate enjoys watching the growth of her patients who thought that they could never heal as they realized they had the ability within themselves the whole time.

Kate has developed a clinic, Trauma Treatment Center, in New Mexico that delivers treatment to address trauma across the lifespan and has had her model of treatment published in the Journal of Counselor Practice and the Journal of Trauma Studies in Education. She also works with multiple universities to continue to study the impact of treatment as well as innovative treatment practices.

Kate is the founder of The Jackie Project, a non-profit started in honor of her Grandmother that supports education and literacy for social emotional development with children. The Jackie Project is developing ways to increase access to treatment for underserved areas in New Mexico. Additionally they are working to support continued efforts in complex trauma research.

Kate Bunch

Behavioral Health Worker Award



“One thing I admire about Kate is her integrity. It allows her to guide individuals to have strong work ethic and make informed decisions that supports the welfare of themselves and others, regardless of the situation.”

BIO:

Amy O'Neill was introduced to volunteerism at an early age as encouraged by her family. Her service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger, West Africa, working as a nutrition educator for families with malnourished children, set the stage for her career in community service. As a Project Monitor for Lutheran World Relief she supervised the management of integrated dry season gardening projects in rural Niger to boost food production in local markets. In Kenya she was an advisor to a local women's group and helped them implement a project for water storage tanks.

Arriving in Farmington in 2000, Amy was very pleased to join the ranks of CASA Volunteers with the San Juan CASA Program of Childhaven. The next 22 years introduced her to the challenges facing children, youth and families within the child welfare system. She has thoroughly enjoyed visiting her CASA children, reading with them, playing board games, walking in the neighborhood and finally advocating for them in her CASA Court Report. It is so amazing to see children grow and gain a sense of self. She is happy to have seen many successes as children reached a safe and permanent home. Amy will continue to advocate as a CASA Volunteer for many years to come. She has found that like the Peace Corps, being a Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteer is "the toughest job you'll ever love".

Amy O'Neill

CASA Volunteer Award



"Because of her hard work, the San Juan County CASA program is one of the most successful CASA programs in the state and has served as a model for other CASA programs."

BIO:

Donalyn Sarracino, LMSW, is a member of the Pueblo of Acoma and the proud mother of three children. Since October 2019 serves as the Director of Tribal Affairs with the Office of the Secretary – for the New Mexico, Children, Youth and Families Department. Prior to working with CYFD, Donalyn served as the Director of the Pueblo of Acoma Social Services and was the 2016 recipient of the CLI Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Excellent Award. She is the Founder of the New Mexico Tribal Indian Child Welfare Consortium (established March 20, 2015) and in 2016 NMTIC was recognized as the Program of the Year by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA).

Donalyn received her Bachelor of Science degree from Mt. St Mary University in Los Angeles, California, and her Master of Social Work degree from NM Highlands University. She is a licensed social worker in the state of New Mexico, she was previously the Program Coordinator for The Evolution Group's Compulsive Gaming Treatment Clinic, as well as Mental Health Clinician for New Mexico's Women's Correctional Facility. Donalyn always knew she wanted to use her education and experience to help her people and to be a positive agent of change for those who are disproportionately represented in child welfare, criminal justice, and behavioral health systems. Donalyn states the establishment of the Consortium has been a true team effort "and everyone has really come together to address the issues all tribes are facing when it comes to Indian Child Welfare." She is honored to serve in her current capacity to help address the systemic issues which exist, and to influence policy in a way which positively impacts and supports children, families, and tribal communities.

Donalyn Sarracino

CYFD or Tribal Social Services Leader Award



"Donalyn's untiring enthusiasm, dedication and advocacy to develop, support and put into practice ways to improve the New Mexico Child Welfare system for Native American Children, families and Tribes, Nations and Pueblos is beyond words."

Geneva Rivera

CYFD Protective Services Worker Award

BIO:

Geneva M. Rivera (soon to be King) has worked for CYFD for a total of 5 years. She has served as a 9th and 11th grade teacher as well as an investigator at adult protective services.

Today Geneva is a Senior Investigator in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Geneva is from a small town in Northern New Mexico called Ribera, New Mexico and she graduated from New Mexico Highlands University.

Geneva loves fishing and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Helping children is her passion!

Teamwork makes the Dreamwork!



“Geneva is passionate about her work with CYFD and she is able to engage with children in a way that others at times can’t.”

BIO:

Brooke Stanley Tou is the Director of the Center of Innovation for Behavioral Health and Wellbeing, housed in New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service. She is a licensed Master Social Worker and received her Masters Degrees in both Public Health and Social Work from NMSU in 2010.

Brooke has worked in the field of behavioral health, child welfare and system renovation since 2005 after serving for 3 years the Peace Corps in Burkina Faso where she worked in health education and HIV/AIDS education and support programs. Brooke is committed to upholding a person-centered and value-driven process for system creation and is grateful to her amazing team for all the work they do to further the mission of the COI to create an accessible, effective and responsive network of support for New Mexico families.

Brooke Stanley-Tou

Non-Profit Service Provider Award



“Brooke cares about the consistency of services and interactions that families receive. She models respect for self and others at work and in the community, and is known to be vocal on policy and procedure that isn't properly serving families.”

Rusti and Taden McConnell

Resource Parent Award

BIO:

Taden and I were married in 2015. In 2018 a mother in need had reached out to us asking us to care for her children as CYFD was about to take custody. At the time Taden and I were naive to the dire need for recourse families, but we were quickly made aware. We started the process and got our license about 4 months later. At the time we had no clue what was to come in the next 4 years. We quickly went from a family of two to now a family of 10, our children range from 4 years old to almost 18. Our family has also grown by countless biological relatives, caseworkers, therapists, casa workers, an amazing Guardian ad litem, and so many more wonderful people who have worked hard to ensure the best possible outcomes for the children in our care, and we can't thank them enough.



“Both resource parents, parent and love the children in the home unconditionally and provide/teach much needed moments of compassion, redirection, communication, coping skills, life skills, financial literacy (just to name a few) to the children. The McConnell's are always a strong support for the parents of the children and provide them with guidance and compassion while they are going through the judicial system.”

Bradford Dalley

State or Tribal Judge or Hearing
Officer Award

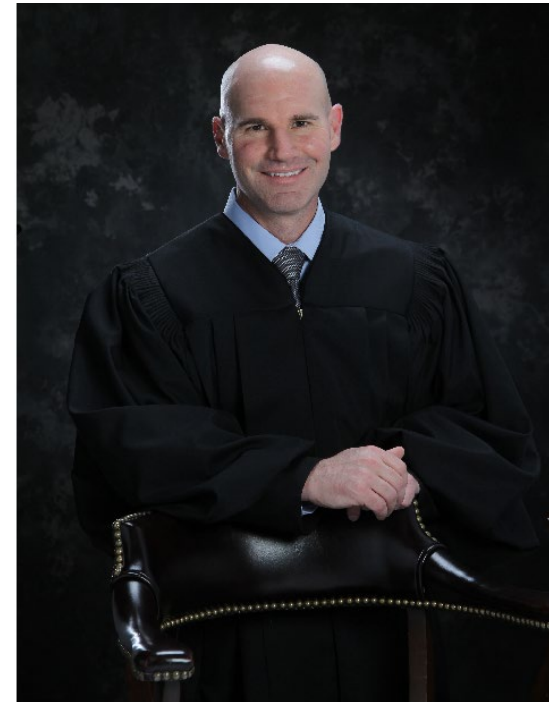
BIO:

Judge Dalley graduated with a J.D. from UNM in 1998 and served with Las Cruces Public Defender's Office from 1998-2000.

He served in a private practice from 2000 through 2015 where he handled many different case types including GAL duties in child dependency cases as well as Respondent's work. He was appointed to the Bench in 2015.

In March of 2019 he was assigned a docket primarily consisting of Children's Court and Family matters.

Judge Dalley also serves on the Fostering Connections Advisory Committee.



"Judge Dalley exemplifies determination in finding solutions to the many problems facing the children and families of San Juan County. He demonstrates a sincere concern for the interests of others and a dedication to make sure all are served equitably.



Ray Floersheim

Attorney Award

“Mr. Floersheim has worked decades in Union and Colfax County and has an amazing knowledge of the families and struggles many go through. He is particularly adept at understanding the youth he works with as he knows where they come from, and the challenges they have face.”

BIO:

Julie H. Bird is a resident and member of Ohkay Owingeh, NM and a mother of two beautiful boys who are also members of Ohkay Owingeh. She is engaged to a wonderful man from Flint, MI. She proudly recognizes her Asian heritage from South Korea. She also respectfully recognizes her affiliations to Kewa, Laguna Pueblo, Navajo Nation and Zuni Pueblo as well as her Hispanic Heritage. Presently, she serves the beautiful tribal community of Nambe Owingeh (Nambe Pueblo), NM as their ICWA Manager. Her service to tribal communities began in 1994 and continues to today. She graduated in 1992 from the Espanola Valley High School and attended Northern New Mexico College to pursue her Associates Degree in Human Services. She has received an array of certificates and letters of recognition in the field of human services specific to tribal communities. She is recognized as a former officer for the New Mexico Tribal Indian child welfare Consortium (NMTIC) and is currently a seated member for Nambe Pueblo.

She has had the privilege to have worked with the communities of Santa Clara Pueblo, San Ildefonso Pueblo and the urban Native American population of Albuquerque. As a lifelong resident and member of Ohkay Owingeh her experiences, teachings, and observations from her tribal community have helped her to advocate and serve her native people. In her sharing of such experiences there is the hope of understanding and education of tribal families' communities, cultural connections and cultural identity and how important those guides are to the wellbeing of our tribal children in relation to child welfare practices and services. Julie has also volunteered and committed to initiatives in Ohkay Owingeh which have led to meaningful and impactful outcomes related to the Indian Child Welfare Act and how those initiatives advocate for the families and children of Ohkay Owingeh.

Julie Bird

Tribal Services Worker Award



“Julie is an advocate for collaboration and coordination between CYFD and tribal social services to ensure that families have access to culturally appropriate services and supports, and to ensure families remain connected to culture and community during and beyond their CPS involvement.”

BIO:

Melissa Beery began this path in 2004 when her then 4 year-old grandson came to live with her. As a child with significant early trauma and attachment issues, they navigated many systems. Today she serves as a Family Peer Support Worker where she uses that lived experience to connect with and support parents, caregivers and guardians that are now walking a similar path. Supporting them, helping them navigate and linking them to services and resources for their child and family.

She currently serves as a Family Peer Support at the UNM Medical Group Behavioral Health Clinic in Sandoval where she uses all of her training, experience, wisdom and support of other Family Peers to meet the needs of families.

Melissa also volunteers with the Community Supports Subcommittee of the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Governing Commission Behavioral Health Initiative, the NM Correction and Juvenile Justice Committee's Joint Legislative Summit on Juvenile Justice, CASA 1st Judicial District, and with the Los Alamos Family Council First Responders

Melissa Beery

Parent/Guardian with Lived Experience Award



“While family peer support has been available in New Mexico for several decades, Melissa is quickly becoming the future of the practice in our state. She speaks up for families in spaces where their voices often aren't heard or are dismissed.”

Trinity Lichte

Youth/Young Adult with Lived Experience Award

BIO:

Trinity Lichte is a member of the Extended Foster Care Committee and actively involved in LUVYA. she spoke at the 3rd annual Peer Summit in 2021 and has reached out to kids in my similar situation through placements and events she has attended. While I've spent nearly 8 years in foster care and age out later this month, she hopes to continue advocating for foster youth in the near future. Trinity is dually enrolled at University High School and Eastern New Mexico University - Roswell, earning her EMS certification. She has been accepted to UNM and plans to attend in the fall 2023 semester.



“No matter what Trinity goes through in life, she continues to express hope for her future. she shows that in her daily interaction with her social worker, fostering connections worker and school officials in the way she continues to advocate for herself and lead by example.”

Reed Ridens

Youth/Young Adult with Lived Experience Award

BIO:

Reed is 22 years old and initially entered into CYFD custody while living with his father in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During his years in state custody, Reed was shuffled through more than 15 placements and seven schools, located across five different towns. After emancipating from state custody in 2018, Reed obtained his bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico, where he is currently an MPA candidate. Reed has been professionally involved in advocacy efforts related to children's welfare and policy reform since 2018 and continues to serve his community as a Youth Leader through NMCAN.



“He is also a role model for other young people. He shows up as a quiet leader in spaces with other young people. He models strategic sharing, effective storytelling, reflection, and genuineness. Other young people appreciate his presence and skills and learn from him. He has also been a great role model for other young people through the education path.”

BIO:

Jolene Martinez is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker currently serving as the Chief Operations Officer for Families & Youth, Innovations Plus., a non-profit organization operating in Southern New Mexico. She earned both her graduate and undergraduate degrees from New Mexico State University (NMSU).

Jolene's career has been focused primarily in child welfare, serving most of her career at CYFD-PS. More recently her efforts have been centered on renewing, developing, and restoring services at Families & Youth, Innovations Plus in the areas of behavioral health, innovative youth programming, child welfare, emergency shelter, and food insecurity. Jolene's social work interests include assessing and intervening with macro systems at their intersection with oppressive practices that harm and immobilize families and communities.

Born and raised in Northern New Mexico, Jolene moved to Southern New Mexico to pursue her education and has made Las Cruces, NM her home for the last 20 years. Jolene is married to a US Army Veteran, Dustin. Together they have been foster and adoptive parents with CYFD

Jolene Martinez

Other: Systems Innovator Award



“Her outstanding leadership, knowledge, experience, and passion has influenced system change and her work has affected new and innovative operations to best support the availability of and accessibility to meaningful continuums of service throughout southern New Mexico.”

2023
CHILDREN'S
ART CONTEST
WINNER

