



THE 27TH ANNUAL Children's Law Institute

Walking the Talk: Prevention, Support, and Radical Acceptance

January 8-10, 2020: Hotel Albuquerque, Old Town

childrenslawinstitute.org

EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

ALISHA HAWTHORNE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL AWARD



"Alisha consistently goes above and beyond for her client's and for her community as a whole. She has spent thousands of hours working with individuals suffering from traumatic experiences."

Alisha Hawthorne-Martinez is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Masters in Social Work graduate of New Mexico Highlands University. She owns and operates Second Chance Counseling LLC (SCC) in San Juan County NM and is the Chief Executive Officer of the NM based not-for-profit, The Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse (CPCSA). SCC aims to promote health and healing in families and communities, specializing in treating trauma, specifically trauma from sexual violence, and in treating youth with sexual behavior problems. It was this work that led Alisha to identify a need for age appropriate sexual abuse prevention materials for children and their caregivers. The book, which has been distributed to thousands of families through medical and mental health providers, led to the formation of the CPCSA. Both agencies have been recipients of grant awards, including one to SCC from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for treatment of youth with Problematic Sexual Behavior, their interfamilial victims, and family. The CPCSA was also one of the 2019 NM Governors Charity Ball Award recipients. Alisha is an adjunct instructor for NMHU, and one of the few approved clinical supervisors for those seeking independent licensure in San Juan County. Alisha is a wife and a mother to two wonderful boys. When she is not "in the trenches" fighting to end sexual violence, she is with her family or reading the latest urban fantasy fiction. Alisha's motto is "One child saved from sexual abuse, and one victim brought to a mentality of survivor, is worth the time, effort, and tears". She has previously been nominated by the NM Business Coalition for a Hero Award, and is now the humble recipient of the NM Children's Law Institute Excellence Award.

RITA BLAZAITIS
CASA VOLUNTEER AWARD



"Through it all Rita remained a good listener and that is why children, teens and families feel heard talking with her."

Rita Blazaitis has spent her professional life as a volunteer, mostly working with children and adults in need. Rita worked with infants and toddlers at a Detroit, Michigan-based orphanage before marrying John Blazaitis. The couple had one daughter, Debra, and were foster parents to a niece whose father had abandoned her. Upon moving to Farmington in 1980, Rita began working with various social justice organizations. She volunteered at her grandchildren's school, even working as a crossing guard. Rita was the leader of the Stephen Ministries program at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Farmington. As a Stephen Minister for more than a decade, Rita provided one-to-one Christian care to people who were hurting. Eight years ago, Rita became a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Volunteer for Childhaven. As a CASA Volunteer, Rita has been an outspoken advocate for children who have suffered abuse and neglect. She is always willing to give of her time to a worthy cause, especially those involving improving the lives of New Mexico's children.

TYLER BENTING
CONTRACT ATTORNEY AWARD



"Tyler really is a top notch attorney and is greatly respected and appreciated in our community."

Tyler W. Benting is an attorney in Deming, New Mexico. Tyler earned his J.D. and his M.S. in Personal Financial Planning from Texas Tech University, and his B.A. in Government from New Mexico State University. Tyler's practice areas include general representation of companies doing business in the southwestern corner of New Mexico, estate planning, probate, real estate transactions, and civil litigation. In the realm of Children's Law, Tyler is a contract Respondents' Attorney. He has also had the pleasure of working with families in the context of adoption, both private and through CYFD. Outside of the office, Tyler enjoys spending time with his wife, Cindy, and their young son visiting new places, trying new foods, and hiking in the Gila and Lincoln National Forests.

PEGGY ADEGOKE
SUBSTITUTE CARE REVIEW BOARD
MEMBER AWARD



"With her background in fostering children and her professional career as the executive director and founder of Living Water Christian Services, she has a wealth of knowledge in her community and knows the services that are available."

Peggy Adegoke has been a member of the Substitute Care Advisory Council (SCAC) since December 2018. In September 2019, she was selected to serve on the organization's advisory committee. Peggy's keen desire to see improvement in New Mexico's child welfare system is what got her interested in serving as an SCAC member. She has also been privileged to be a foster parent for the last few years. As a foster care giver, she sees up close how children in care have been strongly impacted by the actions of the adults in their lives.

Peggy is the owner of Living Water Christian Services, a faith-based business that provides spiritual counseling, Christian life coaching, educational services, etc. primarily to the vulnerable and underserved population. She is the proud wife of a US Army Veteran and mother to two biological children and a sibling group of four foster children, which she and her husband are hoping to adopt soon. In her leisure time, Peggy enjoys gardening, watching movies, traveling, teaching Sunday school, and spending time with family.

GAYLE LANE
CYFD FOSTER PARENT AWARD

"Ms. Gayle has a calmness about her demeanor that gives anyone around her a sense of calm and hope. Ms. Gayle is the ideal foster parent to represent the Department."

Gayle Lane is a foster and adoptive parent in Clovis, NM. She is a supportive and non-judgmental team member who goes above and beyond in caring for the children in her care. Gayle is always respectful and understanding of the case plan and changes occurring within the plan. She is an advocate for her foster and adoptive children and has worked to maintain connections for children with siblings and family members.

JANNA LOPEZ
CYFD JUVENILE JUSTICE STAFF AWARD



"She has dedicated herself to the well-being of young people in the juvenile justice system and their families. Ms. Lopez effectively balances the multiple roles probation officers take on of authority figure, coach, mentor and officer of the court."

My name is Janna Lopez, and I am honored to have been nominated by the New Mexico Children's Law Institute for a 2020 Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Excellence Award. In 1996, I began my career as a Juvenile Probation Officer with the Children, Youth and Families Department in Las Vegas, NM. I graduated from New Mexico Highlands University in 1995 with a bachelor-of-arts-degree in Sociology/Anthropology, with emphasis in Criminology, and Political Science with an emphasis in Law.

Throughout my career, I have been passionate about serving our youth and their families, whether that be working diligently to access appropriate services, or advocating for the well-being of our youth. While our youth need to be held accountable to their actions, they also need to be seen, heard and valued. Their voices matter!

The best advice I can offer others in this field is that of self-care. In order to deal with the challenges and stressful situations that we encounter, self-care is needed to bring a healthy balance. It is also key to being able to continue to do this work for years to come.

In addition to my work, I'm a mother to six year old daughter, Carlie, and fiancé to Carlos Montano. We enjoy traveling and visiting family throughout New Mexico and Colorado. I also enjoy baking and cooking meals for family and friends.

JASMYN MARQUEZ
CYFD PROTECTIVE SERVICES STAFF
AWARD

"Jasmyn is an incredible asset to CYFD and the families working with us. She has quickly made herself irreplaceable and indispensable in her metro region, and is absolutely deserving of recognition for her work."

Jasmyn Marquez is one of CYFD's newer permanency planning workers and is considered a shining star for the Metro Region. Jasmyn is a dedicated worker giving who has set the bar for her colleagues. By working so diligently on her cases, Jasmyn is elevating the work her colleagues conduct on their own. Every action Jasmyn takes is designed to achieve permanency for the children and families she is working with. Her parent clients are open and honest with her, while her child clients are bonded to her. Jasmyn utilizes these connections to hold everyone up and ensure the best possible outcome for the families on her caseload.

BETH GILLIA
CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE
EXCELLENCE AWARD



"For decades Beth has worked tirelessly to train, educate and mentor anyone interested in improving the lives of children; particularly those in foster care or in a detention center."

BETH GILLIA, MA, JD, the Director of the Institute of Public Law, oversees the Institute's Corinne Wolfe Center for Child and Family Justice and Judicial Education Center. She develops publications, training, and educational materials for judges, lawyers, and others in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. She manages a multimillion dollar grant aimed at diversifying and training social justice lawyers to use law to create racial equity and improve the health and well-being of NM children and their families.

To improve the child welfare system and ensure that every parent and child has excellent legal representation, Beth serves and has served on many New Mexico and nationally recognized Commissions and Task Forces, and chairs several Committees. She participates in the Tribal-State Judicial Consortium, the Tribal Indian Child Welfare Consortium, and the Partners Group. She was also on the Board of Directors of the Children's Law Section of the State Bar.

Beth was a judge at the Pueblo of Isleta, a law clerk at the NM Court of Appeals; and has represented children in abuse and neglect cases and domestic violence survivors.

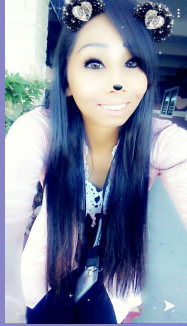
YASMIN HAQUE
CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE
EXCELLENCE AWARD



"I have long admired her ability to see many sides of the cases she advocates for-those with little or no voice in the daunting world of victim's rights, issues and representation."

Yasmin Haque is the CASA Program Director with Youth Heartline in the Eighth Judicial District in Taos. She moved to Taos, New Mexico after studying Biology at the University of Kansas in 2003. Yasmin started out as a CASA Volunteer with Youth Heartline in 2013 before becoming the CASA Volunteer Coordinator in 2014 and Program Director in 2019. In her spare time, Yasmin is a local DJ on an all volunteer radio station in Taos. "I don't want to hear your playlist, let me play you mine."

MONICA LY
PARENT AWARD



"Monica has a desire to improve foster care and now welcomes the opportunity to share her story about her experiences in care as well as how the system can better support young parents."

Monica Ly is from Roswell and is a mother of three. She was in foster care for four years until she aged out at 18. Monica has a desire to improve the foster care system and has recently begun speaking publicly about her experiences in care and as a successfully reunified parent. She is also a member of the a Family Representation Task Force. It is important to Monica that quality resources and supports are available to families and young people in New Mexico's rural communities.

ALMA ROBERSON
PUBLIC DEFENDER IN DELINQUENCY
AWARD



"Alma goes above and beyond to make sure her clients and their families understand what's going on and have a voice at the table."

Alma C. Roberson was born and raised in the border town of El Paso, Texas. She received her Bachelors of Arts from the University of Texas at El Paso, studying Media Advertising with a secondary focus in Political Science. She earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 2012 and immediately began working with the Law Office of the Public Defender. Alma joined LOPD's Juvenile Division in 2015 and represents children in every stage of their delinquency proceedings. As part of her advocacy, she served as a board member of Bernalillo County's Reducing Racism and Ethnic Disparities committee for two years. In September of 2019, she was selected to participate in Georgetown Law's Ambassadors for Racial Justice, a pilot program dedicated to fighting racial inequities in the juvenile justice system. Alma's diverse upbringing has helped instill in her a passion for racial equity in juvenile justice reform efforts.

JENNIFER DELANEY

STATE JUDGE AWARD



"Judge DeLaney has, and continues to, tirelessly advocate for the best interests of the children who are brought into this system."

Judge DeLaney graduated from the Northwestern School of Law of Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon with honors in May of 2002. She was admitted to the Florida State Bar in October 2002, the New Mexico State Bar in May 2003, and the Federal District Court in October 2004. Judge DeLaney's experience in child abuse and neglect cases began in 2003 when she was appointed to represent a father in a dependency case. It did not take long for Judge DeLaney to realize the importance of dependency cases and the need for quality representation for the parents and children involved. She spent over seven years representing parents and children in dependency cases, and had the opportunity to argue before the New Mexico Supreme Court regarding parents' rights. That case changed the way in which New Mexico deals with children who have foreign born parents in abuse and neglect cases.

In 2009 Judge DeLaney took the position of Special Master for the Sixth Judicial District where she heard dependency cases from the temporary custody hearing up until termination of parental rights. In January 2013 Judge DeLaney became one of four District Judges in the Sixth Judicial District and currently hears delinquency cases among her general jurisdiction case load. She became the Chief Judge of her District in 2018. Judge DeLaney also brings a different perspective to these cases because she has been a foster parent and is an adoptive parent as well.

Judge DeLaney was appointed by the New Mexico Supreme Court as co-chair to the Children's Court Improvement Commission in 2015 whose mission is to improve safety, permanency and well-being of children in families in New Mexico. Additionally, Judge DeLaney currently chairs the Family Representation Task Force created by Senate Joint Memorial 10.

ALYSSA DAVIS

FOSTER YOUTH ALUMNUS AWARD



"She has been a Youth Leader with NMCAN for over two years and prior to that she served in various leadership roles within Leaders Uniting Voices, Youth Advocates (LUVYA). These experiences have supported Alyssa's growth as an advocate and a leader, challenging herself to view issues from multiple perspectives, improving her public speaking skills, and becoming a resource to her peers."

Alyssa Davis spent about fourteen years in foster care. During her younger years, Alyssa, her mother and siblings were homeless. Unable to care for her, her mother gave her up. After being in many foster homes, Alyssa was adopted at age ten. Unfortunately, that family did not work out and Alyssa was removed from that home as well. After being brought back into CYFD custody, she aged out of the system. Fighting to keep stable, Alyssa has overcome challenges to accomplish many things including graduating. She is now a mother of a two year old boy and married.

Alyssa has been a Youth Leader with NMCAN for over two years and prior to that she served in various leadership roles within Leaders Uniting Voices, Youth Advocates (LUVYA). She engaged in legislative advocacy for laws such as the foster youth tax credit, expansion of the tuition waiver for foster youth, and the Fostering Connections Act, which extends supports for young people ages 18-21. Alyssa is a member of the Administrative Office of the Courts Family Representation Task Force, the Psychotropic Quality Improvement Collaborative and participated on the CLI planning committee. Alyssa is a born leader and hopes to do much more in the future.

ROSA BARRAZA
SERVICE PROVIDER AWARD

"She is an individual that is sincere and direct with anyone and everyone without making distinction nor allowing power dynamics influence her integrity."

Rosa Barraza has been involved in early childhood education for many years. She has lead the New Mexico Early Childhood Association and their membership by promoting education equity through her annual Bilingual Early Childhood Conference. Rosa has worked with CYFD on strategic planning, information sessions and capacity building for new early childhood education providers.

DANIEL DOUGHERTY
CHILDREN'S COURT ATTORNEY IN
CHILD WELFARE AWARD



"He truly goes above and beyond and our families have benefited from his hard work and dedication."

Daniel T. Dougherty is a Senior Children's Court Attorney for Sandoval and Torrance Counties. He is also a twenty-three year veteran of both the U.S. Army and Air Force where he was a pilot and has flown combat missions in Vietnam and the Gulf War – Desert Storm. After military retirement, Mr. Dougherty attended the University of New Mexico School of Law and became an attorney in 2001. He has been a criminal prosecutor, a civil litigator, and now a Children's Court Attorney. As a prosecutor, he specialized in narcotic, gun, gang, and violent crime. He prepared a case against the Sindicato Nuevo Mexico prison gang members who ordered and carried out a sanctioned murder in prison cell. In civil law, he litigated and defended a New Mexico health management organization in class action suit regarding prescription pricing. He has also handled a variety of civil law cases. In CYFD's metro-Albuquerque office, he worked closely with staff, judiciary, and Respondent attorneys constantly seeking outcomes in the best interest of the children served.