

CONGRATULATIONS

DCFS ALL STARS

DIRECTOR'S EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD WINNERS

February 2011

Outstanding Support Staff

Zareh Zargaryan Senior Departmental Personnel Technician

Headquarters, Health and Safety Management

Zareh Zargaryan is an extremely hardworking and conscientious Senior Departmental Personnel Technician in the Health and Safety Management Section. His depth of knowledge, dedication, diligence and calm demeanor sets him apart from other employees. He is always willing to assist whenever he is approached with any kind of assignment no matter the timeframe imposed upon him. Zareh often goes beyond the call of the duty and generally exceeds expectations. He often takes work home on the weekends in order to meet short turn around deadlines. Zareh has created standardized reports and forms that are user-friendly, not only for the Health and Safety Section but for the Department at large. Currently, all Health and Safety reports are created and tracked manually as the electronic data tracking system is not yet fully operational. Zareh has been instrumental in providing input to BIS regarding the Health and Safety Tracking System currently under development. In addition to his regular duties as a Return to Work Counselor, Zareh is the Department's ADA Coordinator, DMV Pull Notice Specialist, and "How am I Driving Coordinator." He volunteers to take on "special assignments" such as creating reports and analyzing data for tracking employees who are on work restrictions and medical leaves. Zareh works closely with Property Management in deciphering the building codes related to ADA Inspections. He does all this additional work in a thorough, professional manner, without complaint, even though assignments may come as late requests with a short turnaround time. Zareh responds to all emails and telephone calls in a timely manner as he is aware of the need for DCFS staff to be serviced timely given the nature of the work performed in Health and Safety. He is the ultimate team player who is well respected and appreciated by his colleagues. Congratulations to Zareh Zargaryan, the February DERA award winner for Outstanding Support Staff.

Outstanding Direct Service Staff

Renee Marshall, CSW III

South County

Renee Marshall began working for the Department in 2005, as a CSW in the Adoptions Permanency and Resources Division.

Renee received a case with 4 siblings living in their grandparent's home. Though the grandparents were loving and caring, the children had severe social and educational problems, which stemmed from the grandparent's inability to communicate with the children's school. The grandparents were recent immigrants from a third world Asian country and did not speak English. They relied on the children to resolve their own issues outside the home causing stress within the home. Renee identified extended family members who committed to helping the grandparents with the children, with translation and trouble-shooting. She worked with the children to help them identify their own needs and seek appropriate help. Renee also recruited community providers to help the grandparents keep the children safe.

Renee also did great work with an older boy who had a history of numerous placements. This boy was matched for adoptive placement with a female couple. Unfortunately, the boy's foster parents threatened to disrupt the match due to their bias against same sex couples. The boy, influenced by his foster parents, was initially resistant to the idea of being adopted by a same sex couple. Renee worked with the boy regarding his unfounded beliefs and fears regarding same sex couples. The foster family, with Renee's assistance, was able to shed old prejudices and support the boy's move to his new adoptive home. Renee brought the two families together to meet and support the boy in making a successful transition. Renee's positive work also resulted in both families making a commitment allowing the boy to maintain contact with a foster child he grew close with while living with his foster family.

Renee was reassigned to an Emergency Response unit in July 2010. For one family in particular, Renee provided exceptional services. On 10/29/10, Renee received a referral alleging severe neglect toward a 5-month old baby who choked while eating a potato. While at the hospital, Renee discovered that mother had at least 6 more children and that there was a twin to the hospitalized baby. The family had been evicted from their home but Renee was able to track them down living in a motel. She saw that the twin 5-month old was extremely small and after consulting with her SCSW, she took the baby and mother to the hospital. She waited with the mother and baby for several hours, talking to the doctors, expressing her extreme concern for the baby. Renee remained at the hospital until the baby was admitted and then transported the mother back to her motel. By this time, it was after 1:00 am, 8 hours "quitting time". It is quite possible Renee's actions saved the baby's life. According to medical paperwork, the baby weighed a little more than 4 lbs. at birth, and upon admission to the hospital, weighed about 9 1/2 lbs. She weighed over 10 lbs after 3 days in the hospital. So, this baby, who only gained 5 lbs in 5 months, gained about 1 pound in just 3 days while hospitalized. A Team Decision Meeting was held and it was

decided to open a Voluntary Family Maintenance case for this family with full Family Presentation services. A referral was made to CDSS for assistance with medical care at home and to DPSS for additional resources. For her work on this case, Renee was honored as a hero in County Supervisor Don Knabe's State of the County speech on December 8, 2010.

Outstanding Administrative Manager

Wilhelmina Bradley, ARA

Juvenile Court

Wilhelmina Bradley manages the DCFS 241.1/Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Unit located at Edelman Children's Court. This Unit functions as a liaison between DCFS regional offices, the Probation Department and Dependency Court. Annually, the Unit processes about 1,200 referrals for 241.1 joint-assessments. These assessments are completed jointly by DCFS and Probation and provide the Superior Court with recommendations pertaining to jurisdiction, supervision and case plan objectives in order meet the youth's safety and permanency needs. Ms. Bradley's staff carefully review court report recommendations for these high-need youth and consult with DCFS regional staff and Probation staff to assure the quality of the court reports.

In addition to her day-to-day management responsibilities for the operations of the 241.1/MDT Unit, over the last several years, Ms. Bradley has functioned as the lead manager for various initiatives aimed at improving policies and practices related to crossover youth. A general definition for "crossover youth" is youth who have been involved with both the dependency and the delinquency system. In this role, Ms. Bradley has worked extensively with internal and external stakeholders to gather support, insights and consensus required to effect change.

Over the years, DCFS has received technical support from national experts including Child Welfare League of America, Casey Family Programs, California State University Los Angeles and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute. Ms. Bradley has embraced opportunities to learn from research and from the work of other jurisdiction in order to continuously improve our practices here in Los Angeles County. She has represented DCFS at inter-state conferences providing jurisdictions the opportunity to learn from each other. She has been proactive in developing systems to gather data required to monitor outcomes for youth. She maintains positive working relationships with representatives from the Department of Mental Health, Children's Law Center, District Attorney, County Counsel and various other groups who are integral to the implementation of a Crossover Youth Practice Model. The practice model addresses interventions from arrest, identification and detention through planning for youth permanency, transition and case closure. As part of this work, Ms. Bradley is currently working closely with the Metro North DCFS Office to roll-out training on the expansion of the AB 129/Multidisciplinary Team Project to this office and the Eastlake Delinquency Court.

Ms. Bradley is definitely a team-player. Her approachability and flexibility has contributed to productive working relationships internally and externally. Her leadership has been invaluable in addressing the needs of crossover youth who are considered to be very vulnerable to negative outcomes. Her staff and her superiors value her calm approach to challenges and open-mindedness about potential solutions.

Outstanding Team Award

Pat McQueen's Unit: Lacey Duncan, Bernie Gooden Jr., Carla Lizarraga, Paul Loya, Rabia Mirza, Denise Rangel-Pichon

South County

During the last year, the Department-wide ER over 60 population grew considerably. Management began weekly ER over 60 conference calls, which led to the sharing of many good ideas as well as lessons learned. For more than a year, the South County office has continued to receive the most referrals per month, routinely assessing the safety of over 1,000 children monthly. While the ER section has done a good job of addressing the referrals, assistance and ideas were requested within the office's other sections. SCSW Pat McQueen and her unit "stepped up to the plate" immediately. In September 2010, SCSW McQueen and her CSWs volunteered to receive the "follow up referrals" assigned to all of the service CSWs, even though they were carrying caseloads. This gesture of team work has helped provide relief not just to the ER staff, but to the FM/R and PP staff, who were concerned about an increase in their tasks. The assistance provided by SCSW McQueen and her staff did not stop there. As a result of the high number of referrals, the DI staff subsequently needed assistance. SCSW McQueen's unit again volunteered to help by offering to write reports when they could. Their commitment and willingness to help out the South County Team has been recognized by management and staff as a wonderful helping hand and is greatly appreciated.

**An Outstanding Colleague
Of Yours Could Be the Next Winner.**

NOMINATE Someone NOW!