



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
1515 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102
215-683-4DHS (4347)
www.phila.gov/dhs

Acting Commissioner
ARTHUR C. EVANS

Deputy Commissioners
JOSEPH E. KUNA
JAMES E. RANDOLPH

For Immediate Release
Contact: Alicia Taylor 215 683-6012

Department of Human Services Hosts Annual Children's Crusader Awards In Honor of National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Press Conference Recognizes Workers and Agencies That Fight to End Child Abuse in Philadelphia, including first ever Crusader Courage Award given to Social Worker attacked while investigating a report of child neglect.

PHILADELPHIA, PA - The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) today recognized the exemplary efforts of DHS staff to protect Philadelphia's children from abuse and neglect in the annual Children's Crusader Awards, held at City Hall. The DHS staff members were recognized for continually rising above challenges to provide Philadelphia families and youth with caring, compassionate and dedicated service. DHS touches the lives of approximately 40,000 children each year, and as part of April's National Child Abuse Prevention Month, DHS staff members are nominated for the award.

This year's Children's Crusader Award recipients were DHS social workers Carol Hobbs-Picciatto, Tanya Betancourt, and Robin Chapolini. Also, for the first time, DHS added the Children's Crusader "Courage" Award, which was presented to Danelle Cooper, a DHS social worker who was physically attacked while providing services to a family.

"Incidences of child abuse and neglect are all too real in Philadelphia," said DHS Acting Commissioner Arthur C. Evans, Jr. "Each year, DHS investigates more than 13,000 reports of abuse and neglect. Of these, approximately 30% are substantiated, and we often encounter parents who need a helping hand. The work conducted on behalf of these children and families is challenging, and DHS employees are rarely recognized for their dedication and compassion. The Children's Crusader Awards gives DHS and the City an opportunity to recognize the work of these dedicated social workers. They make a real difference in the lives of Philadelphia's children and families and they deserve to be honored for their efforts."

Carol Hobbs-Picciatto has been a social worker in DHS' Intake and Family Preservation unit for eight years. She has always shown creativity and skill in dealing with the most complex cases. Carol deals with many difficult domestic violence and medically-fragile child cases, which no other worker wanted to touch. DHS has had several cases where children have been quite ill, but there was not enough evidence to place the children. Carol made sure that everything that could be done was done for the child. She is a deeply caring and committed social worker.

Tanya Betancourt was honored for her willingness and ability to take on difficult new cases. In one case, she was able to provide services and goals to a mentally-ill mother on the case in a thorough manner and on a level that the mother could comprehend. Tanya has many medically-needy clients on her caseload. Most importantly, Tanya is the "go-to" person in her unit and is always willing to lend a sympathetic ear and provide support for the peers in her unit.

Robin Chapolini has been a DHS social worker for more than 10 years. She is very knowledgeable about the laws and procedures that govern DHS and enforce its mission. If a client or peer is unsure or skeptical about something, Robin takes the time to find the answers in writing. She is constantly enhancing her education by attending training sessions and is one of select few supervisors to become specialized in Safety Training. Robin has earned respect from all of her staff and supervisors. Even through the traumatic passing of her mother, Robin maintained constant communication with co-workers to see to it that her unit was well taken care of and supervised in her absence.

Danelle Cooper, the inaugural recipient of the Children's Crusader Courage Award is a 10 year veteran of DHS. Last September, while investigating a report of child neglect she had hair pulled from her scalp; she was bitten, punched and bloodied and afraid she would be killed. When Cooper arrived at a house on Chadwick Street in North Philadelphia she found a toddler and three children unsupervised. The mom came home drunk and Cooper informed her the children couldn't stay there under the circumstances. She expected the usual resistance, but she never expected what would happen next. Cooper was physically and emotionally hurt yet she fought back and testified against her attacker in court. On March 19th, after reading a victim impact statement during sentencing, the Judge sentenced her attacker to a two to four year sentence followed by eight years probation.