

# NEWS NEWS



## Department of Human Services

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**Anne Marie Ambrose,  
Commissioner**

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### DHS Recognizes Crusaders in the Fight to End Child Abuse

Philadelphia, PA--On Wednesday, April 28, the Department of Human Services (DHS) hosted a ceremony to present the eleventh annual Children's Crusader Awards. The event took place at 10:30 in Conversation Hall in City Hall.

The Crusader Awards recognize those social workers who embrace the protection of children with unbridled zeal and devotion. This year, a special award will also be presented to high-school student Kerri Gallagher for her work on behalf of youth in care. In addition, a new statewide initiative called Preventing Child Abuse, Pennsylvania, will be introduced. The initiative aims to raise awareness of and involve communities in child abuse prevention efforts.

The event will highlight DHS' ongoing efforts to prevent child abuse, neglect and delinquency in recognition of April's designation as Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month in Philadelphia. DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose noted that in the past year, the Department had achieved many outcomes that have resulted in improved child safety and well being including:

- A 13 percent decrease in the number of children in dependent placement--an indication that more children are maintaining or achieving permanency.
- A more than 50 percent reduction of out-of-state delinquent and dependent placements, ensuring that DHS can better monitor and ensure the quality of services delivered; and children and youth in placement can better maintain family ties.
- The implementation of a comprehensive safety model of practice, which incorporates child safety assessments into all aspects of decision making.

Ambrose thanked the three Crusader Award winners for going above and beyond the call of duty in their service to children and families. “The winners of this award are truly crusaders in their effort to not only protect children but to ensure they have the positive supports they need to succeed,” she said. The individual winners of the 2010 Children’s Crusader Award are:

**Gena Chandler-Miller:** A youth detention counselor at the Youth Study Center, Gena is known to be invested in improving outcomes for children and strives to develop and implement creative, educational and impactful programming. This year, she developed and coordinated the first Annual Teen Summit at the YSC.

**Michael Gayner:** Michael began his career at DHS in 1999 as a Youth Detention Counselor and currently serves as a Social Worker II with Children & Youth Division. He is described by his co-workers as someone who consistently goes the extra mile for both colleagues and clients, particularly those with special needs.

**Vanessa Smith King:** With over 20 years of dedicated service to children and families, Vanessa currently works in the Prevention Division with families referred for truancy issues. Vanessa is known to go out of her way to help ensure her clients succeed in school even using her personal time to make home visits to families on evenings and weekends.

A special Young Crusader Award will also be presented to **Kerri Gallagher**, a 17 year-old student at Mt. St. Joseph’s who launched an effort to provide duffle bags for youth in care. After seeing her three adopted cousins arrive at their new home with only a plastic bag for their belongings, Kerri took initiative to start Duffles for Kids. In partnership with her parish, she has raised about \$1900 to purchase more than 260 duffle bags for youth in DHS care.

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*The Philadelphia Department of Human Services is the City agency charged with protecting children from abuse, neglect, and delinquency; ensuring their safety and permanency in nurturing home environments; and strengthening and preserving families by enhancing community-based prevention services. In partnership with community organizations, DHS*

*provides services to strengthen the overall well being of Philadelphia children, youth, and families using a customer focused approach that is responsive to evolving community needs.*