



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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The Department of Human Services Honors Crusaders for Children

Highlighting the work of Police Officer La'Tonya Bey-Gore in the Nationally Modeled Diversion Initiative between the Police Department, the Department of Human Services and the School District

PHILADELPHIA, PA – This morning at City Hall, in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) held its 18th Annual Children's Crusader Awards, highlighted DHS' ongoing efforts on behalf of abused and neglected children and honored the unsung heroes of the child welfare system; staff and partners whose extraordinary work and dedication protect our cities children and youth.

Mayor Kenney, DHS Commissioner Cynthia Figueroa, Police Captain John Wilczynski presented the Children's Crusader Awards to the following winners: DHS staff Diane Burden and Jeffrey Thompson, Community Umbrella Agency (CUA) staff Debora Brown from Turning Points for Children and Derrick Butts from Bethanna and lastly, in the Community Partner category, Police Officer La'Tonya Bey-Gore for her work with the Police School Diversion Program.

"It is an honor to recognize extraordinary staff and partners who work tirelessly – 24/7 - to address issues of child abuse and juvenile justice in our community." DHS Commissioner Cynthia Figueroa said, "When the rest of the city sleeps, our staff are answering the Hotline, meeting with families, finding a foster home for kids, and ensuring the safety of youth at the Juvenile Justice Center. As I often say, DHS alone cannot be the only answer to keeping children safe. We need the whole community to be a voice for children, to be the support to a stressed parent, to become a foster care parent, and consider adoption - not just during Child Abuse Prevention month in April—but every month."

This year the Community Partner award went to Police Officer La'Tonya Bey-Gore, for her work with the School Police Diversion Program. The program - a collaboration between the Police Department, DHS and the School District of Philadelphia- is seeing incredible results: within the first year of this nationally modeled-after program, the number of arrests dropped by 54% and there were 1,051 fewer behavioral incidents in Philadelphia's public schools.

Police Officer La'Tonya Bey-Gore explained her mantra "Lose a little sleep; but rest well", she said "...at the end of the day, my main concern is about the future of the students that we are diverting from arrest. The hope is they make the most out of this amazing opportunity. In addition, I pride myself in doing everything in my power

to make sure they have access to the myriad of resources and information available not only for the student but for the family as well. So, if I lose a little sleep for such a worthy cause, I'm able to rest well when it's all said and done."

ABOUT THE AWARD RECIPIENTS:

Department of Human Services Winners:

Diane Burden, Clerk III, Human Resources Department.

While most of Diane's work is not seen publically—she is a valuable asset to our Human Resources Department. As staff describes it, she is a go-to human resources expert who is extremely resourceful and responsive. Diane exhibits a sincere concern for others and always goes above and beyond for DHS employees. Her co-workers unequivocally agree that Diane is the epitome of a "Children's Crusader".

Jeffrey Thompson, Youth Detention Counselor 2, the Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center
Jeffrey has established himself as a valuable youth mentor to the 16 and 17 year old youth with whom he works. The creative activities that he designs for these struggling youth; like Juvenile Justice Shark Tank and a rap/poetry contest complete with a panel of judges, have challenged the youth to think outside the box and inspire confidence.

Community Umbrella Agency (CUA) Winners:

Debora Brown, Turning Points for Children Case Management Supervisor

Debora's passion and dedication for her work makes her a perfect role-model for staff. She is a valued mentor who goes out of her way to support her direct staff and ensure that the children being served in her Unit are receiving the top notch advocacy supports needed. Debora exemplifies the true meaning of a "Children's Crusader".

Derrick Butts, Bethanna Case Manager

Derrick's exceptional case management skills and diligence has changed the trajectory of many children and families lives. Through his intense focus, perseverance and incredible work ethic, Derrick has kept large sibling groups together, many coming from extremely complex cases and has a remarkable track record of reunifying families. He is so dedicated to his work, that in the past, he has been "ordered" to take a day off!

Community Partner Winner:

Police Officer La'Tonya Bey-Gore, Police Diversion Liaison Officer

PO La'Tonya Bey-Gore is the critical link between Police Department and DHS to help ensure that first time offending youth are diverted from the criminal Justice system. She is in daily communication with DHS social workers to help ensure that resources and appropriate youth-serving programs are accessible and being used by the families who need them the most.

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About Us

The Philadelphia Department of Human Services is the county child welfare agency. We lead, support, coordinate and implement services to prevent and address child abuse and neglect; and operate juvenile justice programs for Philadelphia.

The Police School Diversion Program is a collaboration between the Philadelphia Police Department, the City's Department of Human Services and the School District of Philadelphia. By providing community-based social services to students as an alternative to arrest, the Police School Diversion Program can address young people's needs while keeping them out of the justice system, thereby increasing their chances of staying in school and reducing the risk of future misbehavior.