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Editor's Note: Photos attached; cutlines listed below

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Extraordinary Parents Earn Recognition at Foster Parent Appreciation Reception

Parents recognized for opening their heart and home to children in foster care

BROWARD COUNTY – In recognition of National Foster Care Month in May, three extraordinary foster parents in Broward County were honored by ChildNet, the Community-Based Care (CBC) lead agency in Broward and Palm Beach counties, during a recent Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner.

Child welfare administrators and the dedicated foster parents who open their hearts and homes to children in foster care were in attendance.

“Each and every person who attended this dinner has dedicated so much of their life and time to helping us care for those children most in need of love and a place to call home,” said Wendy Smith, Director of Foster Home Recruitment and Quality. “Unfortunately, there is an increasing number of children who end up in foster care due to abuse, abandonment and neglect. We honor all of the foster parents in our community for providing loving homes and recognize those who have gone above and beyond for the children in their care.”

Social service agencies nominate foster parents who have excelled in their parenting roles for the coveted Foster Parent of the Year Awards, which were presented by Smith and Monica Figueroa King, Executive Director of ChildNet in Broward, during the Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner, hosted by ChildNet.

Coral Springs resident Karen LaSure was among the recipients recognized with this special award. LaSure has fostered 43 children and adopted four over the past 22 years through 4Kids of South Florida. She also has experience fostering children through Children’s Medical Services, children who have suffered from Leukemia, Charge Syndrome, blood disorders, Cerebral Palsy and various other medical challenges. Despite this, she manages to not only attend medical and hospital appointments each week, but takes an annual retreat to Island Dolphin Care in the Florida Keys and makes frequent trips to Disney World with her children.

Diana Lake, a Davie resident, was also named a Foster Parent of the Year. Lake has fostered more than 20 teenage girls who were struggling with substance abuse, bi-polar disorder, depression, conduct disorder, as well as girls who were involved in human trafficking and the Department of Juvenile Justice. Although she originally planned to foster babies, she soon realized the incredible need teenagers have for a safe and nurturing home as well. While working with the National Youth Advocate Program, she has always treated her foster children like they were her own and works tirelessly to ensure their success.

Sondra Ragin, a Sunrise resident, was another recipient of this special award. Ragin works closely with those children who have significant mental health and behavioral needs and has been a therapeutic

foster parent for 14 years. Her ability to provide a nurturing structure while maintaining a kind demeanor has proven to be a great benefit for traumatized children.

“These awards are given to remarkable foster parents, and we are proud to recognize all of them for their relentless spirit and the incredible impact they have on our children,” said King. “Not only do they inspire us, but they have become excellent role models for other foster parents and families.”

As the lead agency in Broward and Palm Beach counties and single private non-profit entity responsible for administration of the local child welfare system, ChildNet brings years of dedication to protecting abused, abandoned and neglected children in the communities it serves.

For more information about becoming a foster parent, please contact ChildNet in Broward County at 954-414-6001. Visit www.ChildNet.us and www.facebook.com/ChildNet.

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ABOUT CHILDNET:

ChildNet has been chosen by the Florida Department of Children & Families to serve as the Community Based Care (CBC) lead agency in both Broward and Palm Beach counties. As such, it is the single private non-profit entity responsible for administration of the local child welfare systems in each county. It fulfills this responsibility by managing comprehensive networks of child welfare services providers and, in Broward, by also serving as the single centralized child welfare case management provider. The agency’s mission is to protect abused, abandoned and neglected children in the communities it serves. Fulfillment of this mission requires constant input and support from community stakeholders and service providers.

Cutlines:

Photo 1 (L to R):Wendy Smith; Sondra Ragin; Monica King

Photo 2 (L to R):William Gear; Wendy Smith; Diana Lake; Monica King; Katie LaMarco

Photo 3 (L to R):Sadia O’Neil; Wendy Smith; Karen LaSure; Monica King; Shelly Numa; Veronica Sterling

Photo 4 (L to R): Christina Parker; Jeannette Patton; Ida and Landry Starling

Photo 5 (L to R): Jose Ibanez; Sonia Colon-Ibanez; Christina Rodriguez; Nicole Duguay

Photo 6 (L to R): Tamar Riley; John LaSure; Karen LaSure; Ashley LaSure

Photo 7 (L to R): Kathy LaMarco; William Gear; Dr. Angela Deal

Photo 8 (L to R): Darlton and Erica Chance

Photo 9 (L to R): Murita and Chalton James; Dhaima Chin

Photo 10 (L to R): Susan Redfern, Kids in Distress; Monica King, ChildNet

Photo 11 (L to R): Wendy Smith; Felix Santiago; Sondra Ragin

Photo 12 (L to R): Eva Walker; Monica King; Allen Walker