



## SOCIAL SERVICES NEWS

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### **CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAM RECOGNIZED FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF YOUTH**

HICKORY -- The Child Wellbeing Program of Catawba County Social Services was recently named one of 15 local, state and national youth and family serving initiatives making a critical difference in the lives of youth in foster care by the [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) (CSSP), a national organization based in Washington, DC.

The Child Wellbeing Program was recognized because of its commitment to building qualities that help youth (age 11-26) – particularly those in the child welfare system - mitigate or eliminate risk and promote healthy development and well-being.

The local program was developed with support from The Duke Endowment. The program's goal is to strengthen reunified, adoptive and guardianship families and increase the wellbeing of children who were previously in foster care. Success Coaches provide ongoing case management, skill-building and support to families who voluntarily participate and an Educational Advocate tracks the academic achievement of children served. This program serves as a model program for other departments of social services. Part of the program involves collecting long-term data to document the success of this

approach. This award is just the latest accolade for the Child Wellbeing Program, which has been in operation since 2010 and is led by Dawn Wilson, social work program manager.

"We are pleased to receive this national recognition for the Child Wellbeing Program," said John Eller, director of Catawba County Social Services. "We hope it can serve as a model for best social work practices and improve the lives of the children and families we serve."

The initiatives recognized with this award all exemplify CSSP's [Youth Thrive](#)<sup>TM</sup> framework, which is built around five research-informed factors: youth resilience, social connections and concrete support in times of need, knowledge of adolescent development, cognitive and social-emotional competence in youth.

The Child Wellbeing Project will provide CSSP and the child welfare field with on the ground examples of policies, training and programs that operationalize the Youth Thrive protective and promotive factors. That information will be used to help influence program and public policy change across the country.

"These 15 programs represent organizations and agencies that are achieving outcomes that are truly improving the well-being of very vulnerable youth," said Susan Notkin, CSSP associate director. "They share a deep understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities adolescents face, the impact of trauma they have experienced and the commitment needed to stick with them, no matter what."

Programs were selected out of more than 130 nominees and were chosen after a rigorous review that included a detailed written application, extensive site visits and interviews with youth, families and staff.

The other selected programs are:

- Anu Family Service, St. Paul, MN
- Center for Fostering Success- Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI
- FAME-Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
- FosterEd, Oakland, CA
- Just Like Me-Family Support Services of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL
- MAAC/EmpowerMENT, Atlanta, GA
- My Life Project-Portland State University, Portland, OR
- Next Generation Center-Children's Aid Society, New York, NY
- Youth Advisory Board-Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center, Mechanicsburg, PA
- Personal Best for Teens-Ackerman Institute, New York, NY
- PHILLIPS Family Partners, Annandale, VA
- Unconditional Care Model-Seneca Family of Agencies, San Francisco, CA
- Trauma Informed Care-SaintA, Milwaukee, WI
- Transitional Living Program-Youth Villages, Memphis, TN



Members of the Child Wellbeing team include the following (left to right): Shauna Heavner, success coach; Ligia Cushman, success coach, Susan Propst, administrative assistant; Lisa Thompson, success coach; Adrienne Overby, educational advocate; Dawn Wilson, program manager. Not pictured are Chrissy Triplett, supervisor; Heather Ball, evaluation coordinator; and Jim Wachsmuth, post-care clinician.

### **About The Center for the Study of Social Policy**

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) is a national, nonprofit organization recognized for its leadership in shaping policy, reforming public systems and building the capacity of communities. For more than 30 years, CSSP has influenced and supported elected officials, public administrators, families and neighborhood residents to take the actions they need. Based in Washington, DC, CSSP translates research and new ideas into strategies for on-the-ground implementation. We use the knowledge from those real experiences to better inform the *next* generation of ideas, programs and policies. CSSP's goal is to make sure low income children can learn, develop and thrive with the support of strong families, in safe and healthy communities. For more information, visit [www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org) or call 202.371.1565.