

APRIL 2020

Department of Children and Families SPOTLIGHT ON WHAT'S RIGHT



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

A Message from Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes.....

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. As we continue to experience limited social contact and daily telework, why are we putting out another "Spotlight on What's Right" newsletter? [Read more](#)



"This is where crisis meets opportunity"

Deputy Commissioner
Jodi Hill-Lilly

"Families are the greatest source of strength for children and communities are the greatest source of strength for families"

Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes

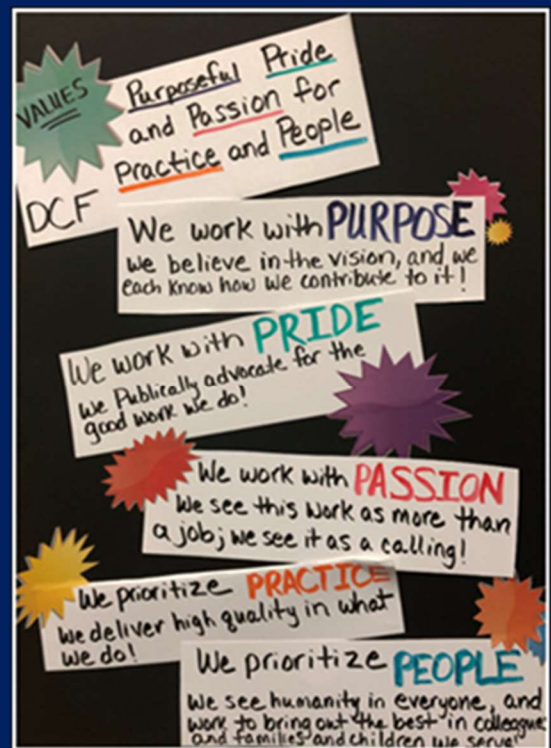
"We can't go back now that we know what we are capable of doing."

Academy Director
Tracy Davis



THANK YOU GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

Thank you to Governor Ned Lamont for his continued support of the Department of Children and Families and for the acknowledgement of our work in this tweet.



COMMISSIONER DORANTES SPEAKS TO NATIONAL COLLEAGUES

Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes was highlighted during a national Child Welfare Leadership forum sponsored by Casey Family Programs. The Commissioner spoke to over 200 colleagues across the country about the approaches and strategies currently being utilized in Connecticut during the COVID-19 pandemic. This collaborative call was intended to offer timely, informative and supportive peer-to-peer exchange to help state, county and tribal child welfare leaders and their emergency management colleagues connect as they seek to manage operations and effectively support children, youth and families, agency staff and community-based providers during these times of great need.



Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes spoke at the Governor's press conference announcing the Talk it Out line.

Watch on CTN: <http://www.ctn.state.ct.us/ctnplayer.asp?odID=17316>

"When it Builds Up, Talk it Out"

To further our efforts in supporting and empowering families, we have collaborated with the United Way and community providers to establish a "When it Builds Up, Talk it Out" campaign.

All communities need help right now and we must recognize the additional stress and impact these times present, especially to communities of color, families with young children and parents of children with specialized needs. [Read More](#)



Samantha Diaz - Essential in Many Ways

While most 12-year-old girls are wavering between playing with dolls or having school boy crushes, keenly aware of social media platforms that seem to define a "tween," Samantha Diaz was spending her pre-teen days in a real-life story of survival. Ironically, over a decade later, she finds herself in another story of survival. While battling the Covid-19 pandemic as a DCF Investigator, this front-line worker is submerged in the work while adapting to this new norm. [Read more](#)

Governor's Council on Women and Girl's Health and Safety Subcommittee



"What We Know, What We are Doing and What We Plan to Do"

How are we managing the daily operations of the Department? What are we doing to ensure clear communication across the system as key components of our work are completed? With whom are we consulting and interacting? [Please read here for more information....](#)



PRTF Spreading Positivity

Imagine yourself walking around the campus of a large facility and you see chalk art. Walk a little further and there is more. On another part of campus, additional images.



John Fontanez is a Recreational Therapist Assistant at the Solnit South PRTF. This is his second time working for DCF and in total, has dedicated 7 years to the youth with whom he works daily to "keep connected." Speaking to him is easy, it is understood how he can creatively work with the youth. [Read More](#)



(Artwork Provided by Solnit-North Campus Children)

Hearts for "Superheroes"

Beautiful hearts hang on the outside wall of the Central Office building in Hartford. Each day, as hundreds of cars pass by, these hearts serve as a calming visual during uncertain times. Who made them? How did they get here? What is their purpose? [Read More](#)



CT DCF: INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL WILLIAMS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

Renee DiNino, from The River 105.9 iHeart Radio, Interview with Michael Williams, Deputy Commissioner. Topic: Helping children in need in Connecticut. [Link to Interview](#)



**Hartford
Courant**



By KEVIN RENNIE
HARTFORD COURANT |
APR 09, 2020 | 2:00 PM

Kevin Rennie: Some state agencies are stepping up during the coronavirus crisis

The global coronavirus pandemic continues to reveal to Gov. Ned Lamont how well certain critical components of his administration are working under the pressure of a public health crisis.

Lamont will look back with relief on the day he asked Department of Children and Families veteran Vannessa Dorantes to become commissioner of the child protection agency, which had a history of troubles that grew worse under the previous administration. Isolation is a formidable enemy for an agency that runs on contact with vulnerable children and their erratic families. [Read more](#)





Thank You Dr. Mike!

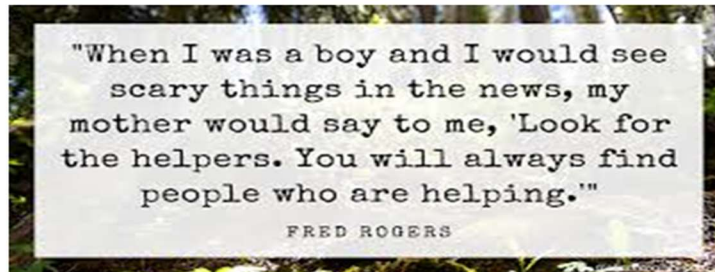
Our work is emotional, draining and given the complexities of the families we are serving, high risk. As professionals, we make sacrifices to assist those in greatest need of support. Who do the helpers rely on when they need assistance? Dr. Mike!

He likes to put us in circles. Talk about "hoops" and his favorite baseball team. Upon entering a room, you hear him enthusiastically say, "Nice to see you."

Thank you Dr. Michael Schultz for over two decades of service, committed to empowering and strengthening the workforce, and your compassion expressed towards each one of us.

Few may know that Dr. Mike delayed retirement upon hearing of the COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot thank you enough for changing your plans to "stay connected" with us.

Words may be hard to express what you have meant to the Agency and how you have impacted our lives. Perhaps this quote by Mr. Rogers puts it best:



Thank you, Dr. Mike for being the "helpers' helper." We wish you all the best.

The Passing of Josh Kovner



(Hartford Courant)

We express our condolences to the family of Hartford Courant investigative reporter Josh Kovner. A veteran of nearly 25 years, it was Josh who gave voice to the stories of those oppressed and vulnerable in our communities. Communications Director Gary Kleeblatt was a long-time colleague of Josh's who offered these thought up learning of his death. "Josh was a great reporter - smart, knowledgeable and fair. Even more, Josh was a great person whom I admired and respected very much." We ask that you keep the family of Josh Kovner in your thoughts.

For Additional Pictures and Highlights [Click HERE](#)

Need Information and Resources? Visit: [DCF COVID-19 Information and Resources page](#)

Need Someone To Talk To?: Visit: <http://www.talkitoutct.com>

Please send us your thoughts on lessons learned during the pandemic and considerations for post COVID-19 planning: DCF.COVID-19@ct.gov

Department of Children and Families
505 Hudson Street • Hartford CT, 06106
Phone: 860-550-6300 † E-mail: Commissioner.dcf@ct.gov
Web: <https://portal.ct.gov/dcf>

