



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greene County judge honored for contributions to foster care system

[Casey Family Programs](#), a Seattle-based national foundation dedicated to safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families, announced this week that a Greene County judge has been selected as a recipient in its annual Casey Excellence for Children Awards.

Judge Andy Hosmer, a juvenile judge in the 31st Judicial Circuit Court, was recognized with a leadership award, which recognizes leaders in child welfare who have had a significant impact in improving outcomes for children and families.

Since graduating from New York University School of Law in 1989, Judge Hosmer has engaged in private practice, served as an assistant attorney general, and worked as an assistant public defender and assistant prosecuting attorney in Greene County. He was appointed as an associate circuit judge in 2014 and voters retained him in 2016.

Presiding Judge Michael Cordonnier said the award is a wonderful confirmation of Judge Hosmer's dedication and contributions to the community.

"The Greene County Court has long known what great work Judge Hosmer does in the Juvenile Court, so it is only fitting that he is recognized for this leadership award," he said.

The foundation said this of Judge Hosmer:

"In his time on the bench, he has instituted a series of major reforms including: prioritizing slow-moving and high-needs cases; launching a court specifically for older youth in foster care; and establishing a residential placement review hearing process. His case management and assignment systems ensure that children in foster care are on quicker paths to permanency and experience shorter lengths of stay. Judge Hosmer's "T-N-T" (Teens in Transition) court is a voluntary docket that engages the community to help older youth in foster care pursue their educational goals and secure career-track jobs. His purpose in establishing residential placement review hearings was to create a process for safely moving children out of residential care."

See attached for the full press release from Casey Family Programs and a photo of Judge Hosmer.

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For more information, contact Trysta Herzog, Greene County Director of Communications, at 417.868.4140 or therzog@greencountymo.gov.



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2018 Casey Excellence for Children Awards winners announced

Casey Family Programs recognizes nine individuals dedicated to improving child welfare across America

Seattle – [Casey Family Programs](#), a Seattle-based national foundation dedicated to safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families, announced today the recipients of its annual Casey Excellence for Children Awards.

The awards recognize outstanding individuals who have demonstrated distinguished work, exceptional leadership and tireless dedication in improving child welfare in America. The awards are given in the following categories:

- **Alumni and Family:** These awards are presented to alumni of foster care, foster or adoptive parents, kinship caregivers and birth parents who have demonstrated extraordinary efforts to improve the lives of children and families.
- **Leadership:** These awards recognize leaders in child welfare who have had a significant impact in improving outcomes for children and families and building Communities of Hope.

“Every year, we look forward to sharing inspiring stories of impressive individuals from a variety of backgrounds who work to improve child welfare throughout our great country,” said David C. Mills, chair of the Board of Trustees of Casey Family Programs. “It is our absolute honor to recognize these individuals for advocating so strongly on behalf of children in foster care and their families, and for giving them greater opportunities to thrive.”

The winners for 2018 are:

<i>Alumni Award</i>	Lupe O. Tovar	Tulsa, Oklahoma
<i>Foster or Adoptive Parent Award</i>	Robin Whiting	Melbourne, Florida
<i>Kinship Caregiver Award</i>	Lynn Urvina	Lacey, Washington
<i>Birth Father Award</i>	Rosalio Chavoya	San Jose, California
<i>Birth Mother Award</i>	Alise Hegle	Seattle, Washington
<i>Leadership Award</i>	Judge Andy Hosmer	Springfield, Missouri





Leadership Award	Washington Rep. Ruth Kagi	Shoreline, Washington
Leadership Award	Jami Ledoux	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Leadership Award	Gregory McKay	Phoenix, Arizona

Alumni Award

Lupe O. Tovar
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Lupe O. Tovar possesses one of the strongest voices of alumni of foster care in the country. She has been active in [Foster Care Alumni of America](#), founding local chapters in Arizona and Oklahoma, and serving on the national board of directors for 10 years. Working through local and national alumni chapters, she helps to plan and host annual holiday dinners that serve as reunions at a time when many young alumni struggle with finding a place to connect. Ms. Tovar has helped push for critical child welfare reforms on the federal level. She has participated in Capitol Hill briefings, testified before congressional committees and attended the 2011 Oval Office signing of the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act. In 2015, the White House recognized her as a [Foster Care Youth Champion of Change](#).

View video story here: <https://youtu.be/3ctt3qbqgsE>

Foster or Adoptive Parent Award

Robin Whiting
Melbourne, Florida

Robin Whiting has adopted five children and fostered more than 30, most of them needing extensive medical care. A trained emergency medical technician, neonatal nurse and the first female firefighter in Brevard County, Fla., she helped launch the county's [Medical Foster Care Program](#), which helps foster parents care for medically fragile children. While serving as a medical foster care coordinator in 2004, Ms. Whiting met Robie, an 11-month-old boy whom doctors said would never walk, talk or thrive. Ms. Whiting adopted Robie, and today he walks, talks, rides horses, swims, kayaks and is the very picture of happiness. Since welcoming Robie into her family, Ms. Whiting has adopted three of Robie's biological sisters and a 2-year-old girl with a history of three open-heart surgeries.

View video story here: https://youtu.be/e1U1GtPt_io





Kinship Caregiver Award

Lynn Urvina
Lacey, Washington

Lynn Urvina is a kinship navigator for the nonprofit [Family Education and Support Services](#). She provides practical and emotional support to caregivers who, like her, are raising grandchildren. She helps kinship caregivers traverse court systems, work with Child Protective Services and advocate on behalf of the children. She also links them to benefits and services they need to raise children successfully. In addition, Ms. Urvina facilitates the Washington state Kinship Caregiver Support Program in her local area. She and her husband began raising her granddaughter, Tara, when the child was 11 months old. It was not always easy and Ms. Urvina sought help by attending a kinship support group. One evening, a local kinship navigator made a presentation to the group and mentioned that she soon would be leaving the job. Ms. Urvina knew right then that kinship navigation was her calling.

View video story here: <https://youtu.be/YQ0o8VOcrCQ>

Birth Parent Awards

Rosalio Chavoya
San Jose, California

Rosalio Chavoya works as a mentor parent with [Dependency Advocacy Center](#), a nonprofit that provides free legal services to parents involved in Santa Clara County's child welfare system, including many who seek reunifications with their children. The center had represented Mr. Chavoya through his own successful family reunification. He had entered the juvenile dependency system with a history of substance abuse, crime and gang activity — including time spent incarcerated. As a provider of peer-to-peer support, Mr. Chavoya relates especially well to fathers re-entering society after incarceration. His guidance has led to many successful reunifications between fathers and children in Santa Clara County. Mr. Chavoya also provides leadership through committees, trainings and presentations within the child welfare arena, working alongside judges, attorneys, social workers and a variety of community stakeholders.

View video story here: <https://youtu.be/PI2m9H8qzH0>

Alise Hegle
Seattle, Washington

Alise Hegle is a compassionate ally and forceful advocate for birth parents. As a peer mentor for [Washington state's Parents to Parents Program](#), she uses her own life lessons to engender



hope in families involved in the dependency system. She works for [Children's Home Society of Washington](#), where she makes sure the birth parent perspective is reflected in state and local policy, practice and system reforms in child welfare. Ms. Hegle's daughter was removed at birth due to her struggles with substance abuse and a pending prison sentence. As part of her sentencing, however, Ms. Hegle participated in a treatment program and reunified the following year with her daughter, now nearly 9. Ms. Hegle shares her story of reunification not only to inspire birth parents, but also to educate state and federal policymakers about systemic barriers that impede families from thriving.

View video story here: <https://youtu.be/l3r5y85gRO4>

Leadership Awards

Judge Andy Hosmer
Springfield, Missouri

Judge Andy Hosmer is juvenile judge in the 31st Judicial Circuit Court of Missouri (Greene County). In his time on the bench, he has instituted a series of major reforms including: prioritizing slow-moving and high-needs cases; launching a court specifically for older youth in foster care; and establishing a residential placement review hearing process. His case management and assignment systems ensure that children in foster care are on quicker paths to permanency and experience shorter lengths of stay. Judge Hosmer's "T-N-T" (Teens in Transition) court is a voluntary docket that engages the community to help older youth in foster care pursue their educational goals and secure career-track jobs. His purpose in establishing residential placement review hearings was to create a process for safely moving children out of residential care.

Washington Rep. Ruth Kagi
Shoreline, Washington

Ruth Kagi, a member of the Washington state House of Representatives since 1999, is hailed as one of the most effective and influential advocates for children, youth and families in the state. Her legislative agenda focuses on improving the quality of early learning and child care, and improving foster care. She currently chairs the House Early Learning and Human Services Committee and was a prime sponsor of far-reaching legislation passed in 2017 to restructure the state child welfare system, creating a new Department of Children, Youth and Families. That change was among other new laws and funding approved last year to reform child welfare programs and better support foster parents. She is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, where she has championed a broad array of budget items, including supports for child welfare caseworkers and foster families. Representative Kagi is a past chair of the National Conference of State Legislatures' Human Services Committee.



Jami Ledoux

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Jami Ledoux became director of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services' Child Welfare Services division in 2014 at a tumultuous time for the agency. Under her leadership, the state was able to safely and substantially reduce entries into foster care, which had risen nearly 50 percent over four years. Partnering with Casey Family Programs, Ms. Ledoux developed the multi-faceted "Sooner Sentinel Sites Initiative," which is addressing a number of system issues including: enhanced training for staff and resource parents; improved outreach to lawmakers, American Indian tribes, the judiciary and the public; and the use of data to demonstrate how policy and practice changes can move children more quickly to permanency.

Gregory McKay

Phoenix, Arizona

Greg McKay, director of Arizona's Department of Child Safety since 2015, has presided over a system transformation. Facing an investigations backlog of more than 16,000 cases, the department introduced a "lean-inspired" management system that has empowered teams to track weekly progress, quickly shift resources, measure results and ultimately eliminate the backlog. Under his leadership, the number of children in foster care in Arizona has been safely reduced by nearly 20 percent. The reduction of children in care is the result of reduced investigative and ongoing caseloads, allowing for more time to engage families and successfully manage safety risks. A former detective specializing in crimes against children and homicide, Mr. McKay has brought his experience to bear in child welfare by helping his team understand the importance of teamwork and camaraderie while serving the mission of helping all of Arizona's children achieve safety so they can grow and thrive.

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