County Staff Honored by Child Abuse Prevention Council

Each year, the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) honors those who go above and beyond in their efforts to reduce incidents of child abuse and neglect in Monterey County. Among those singled out during CAPC’s annual awards breakfast were three County employees whose efforts are deserving of acknowledgement.

The Front Line Award: Yessica Rincon, Social Worker, Behavioral Health Bureau of the Monterey County Health Department.

This award is given to individuals providing direct services to families and children who are victims of child abuse and neglect or at risk of abuse. Yessica was nominated by Bob Brunson, Supervisor, Behavioral Health Bureau, Children’s Services.

“Yessica has spent years as a Family/Home Partner working closely with some of the most challenged families in our mental health system. Often, families with children with special mental health needs face overwhelming hurdles in
simply getting through the day. They encounter many challenges: financial problems, system issues, legal troubles, school demands and just plain exhaustion and depression. Yessica enters the home with a compassion and positive attitude that instills hope while providing guidance and connecting the family to resources to smooth the way to successful independent family functioning.

The best way to prevent child abuse and neglect is through the support of families. Yessica also volunteers to bring the important message of how to raise emotionally healthy children to our many monolingual Spanish-language families. Armed with Spanish language books provided by the CAPC, she presents basic parenting advice in a warm and encouraging fashion, any time of the day or night, any place in our county that can gather a group of interested Spanish-speaking parents.

---

**Lifetime Achievement Award: Dr. Valerie Barnes, Natividad Medical Center.**

From 1987 to 2012, Dr. Valerie Barnes was the Director of Pediatric Services at Natividad Medical Center, an accomplishment worthy of acknowledgement on its own. But Dr. Barnes has held a lifelong dedication to the most vulnerable of us, the children, and has used her position as a doctor, educator and expert witness as well as her quick wit and indomitable personality to improve the lives of children in Monterey County and prevent child abuse.

It was during her tenure as Director of Pediatric Services that Dr. Barnes began working with other Natividad staff on the creation of a clinic where children who were victims of abuse could be examined in a safe and soothing environment. Through persistence and tenacity, that effort resulted in the Bates-Eldredge Clinic which is still in operation today, now bigger and better, providing comprehensive services for young abuse victims.

“I truly believe that children are the most important people in the world,” said Dr. Barnes in accepting her award. “They are our future and deserve nothing but the best of care.”

In 2012, instead of just retiring from Natividad Medical Center, she just changed offices and became the Medical Director for the Archer Child Advocacy Center (which she also helped establish) and Bates-Eldridge Clinic within the hospital.

Her most recent accomplishment is putting the Child Advocacy Center on the pathway to becoming an accredited center for examining children by the National Children’s Alliance and a Center of Excellence. So in giving Dr. Barnes a Lifetime Achievement Award, it is clear that the selection committee will have to check back with this recipient to see what else she will be accomplishing in the years to come.
Talcott Bates Award: Stephanie Hulsey, Assistant District Attorney, Monterey County District Attorney’s Office.

This award is given to a person who has made significant and continuing contributions to the community in the prevention of child abuse. Stephanie was nominated by District Attorney Dean Flippo.

“Upon being appointed to the position of Assistant District Attorney in 2007, Stephanie became a direct advisor to the District Attorney and was given the responsibility of supervising many units. Because of her strong advocacy for the welfare of children, she was placed in charge of the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit, where she supervises deputy district attorneys and works with investigators and medical personnel to hold individuals accountable for assaulting children.

ADA Hulsey was instrumental in helping to establish the Child Abuse Response Team (CART) protocol that is followed by agencies and professionals who are dedicated to protecting children. She is also in charge of our Truancy Abatement Program which annually monitors over 6,000 students. Under ADA Hulsey’s supervision, the prosecutors assigned to the Truancy Unit conduct over a thousand mediation hearings annually and work with parents and school officials to get children back into school.

In addition to her supervision responsibilities, she serves as the District Attorney’s alternate to the Child Abuse Prevention Council and the Children’s Council.

Congratulations to all three honorees.

For those who do not know about CAPC, this council was created by the Board of Supervisors in 1986 to reduce the incidence of child abuse in Monterey County through education and public awareness and to improve the coordination of intervention and treatment resources. The Council reports to the Board of Supervisors through the Social Services Department.

County Public Defender Selected as Defender of the Year

Public Defender Jim Egar has been selected for a prestigious award from the California Public Defenders’ Association - Defender of the Year for 2014. He will receive his award next month during the association’s convention.
Egar is being honored for his work in obtaining adequate medical care and humane treatment for inmates in custody in Monterey County, as well as for his work on behalf of indigent defendants.

Egar says he is surprised and humbled by this recognition by his peers from among deserving Public Defender Office staffs around the state.

“The challenges for indigent defense in Monterey County are overwhelming and satisfaction really only comes from knowing that we do the best we can for each person entrusted to our care,” says Egar. “It is especially significant because the care and treatment of involuntarily incarcerated men and women, boys and girls in our County requires attention and improvement and this award is recognition of the Public Defender’s role in making sure that responsibility is met.”

Child Support Services Thanks Hospitals for Paternity Opportunity Program Partnership

While the County’s Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) establishes orders for support and enforcement of those orders, DCSS cannot complete one very important component of the child support program: establishing paternity. Thanks to a partnership with local hospitals, this important step is accomplished.

DCSS is recognizing local hospitals for helping Monterey County families establish paternity through the Paternity Opportunity Program (POP). Among four local hospitals, paternity was established for 2,466 children in 2013. Here is a breakdown by hospital:

- Natividad Medical Center - 1,381
- Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital - 695
- Mee Memorial Hospital - 246
- Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula - 144
Establishing paternity is critical for children for many reasons. Besides creating lifelong relationships, it gives children access to family genetic and medical information, provides the children with the possibility of acquiring inheritance rights and establishing eligibility under certain benefit programs, such as Social Security and Workers Compensation benefits.

The Paternity Opportunity Program (POP) became a law in California in 1995 and DCSS began collaborating with local hospitals to provide the service in 1997.

POP is very important for children of unmarried parents since a birth certificate alone is not enough to establish paternity if the parents are not married.

Thanks to the collaboration, fathers can sign POP documents right at the hospital. These documents legally establish paternity and allow the father’s name to be placed on the birth certificate with the hospital staff as witness. There is no cost to the father and DCSS reimburses each hospital $10 per document.