



*Parents Lead the Way
to Strengthening Families*

**Parent Leadership Month Press Conference
Minnesota State Capital Building – Room 125
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

Wednesday, February 24, 2010



Prevent Child Abuse
Minnesota



CIRCLEofPARENTS®
Sharing Ideas. Sharing Support.

Parents Anonymous® Inc. founded National Parent Leadership Month in 2003

This event celebrates the great contributions parents make to our communities, and recognizes professionals and parents partnering to strengthen families.

Agenda

12:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions, and Opening Remarks

Rena Moran, Parent Leader Coordinator

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota

12:02 p.m. Recognition of Parent Partners

Charles Dixon, Co-Chair – Statewide Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency Parent Partnership Committee;

Soua Lee, Co-Chair – Statewide Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency Parent Partnership Committee; and

Tasha Fox, Chair – Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota and Circle of Parents® Parent Leadership Team

12:05 p.m. History of Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota's Parent Leadership Efforts

Connie Skillingstad, Executive Director

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota

12:10 p.m. Presentation of Honorees

Rep. Jeff Hayden

12:40 p.m. Acknowledgement and Closing

Rena Moran, Parent Leader Coordinator

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota

*To the world you may be one person,
but to that one person you may be the world.*

*We would like to thank the following organizations
who co-sponsored this event with us to make this day a success.*

Co-Sponsors

Amallina, LLC

Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corp

Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church

Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES)

Hennepin County Family & Children Services

HIRED

Hmong American Partnership

Mankato Circle of Parents®

Minnesota Association for Family & Early Education

Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network

Minnesota Head Start Association

Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention & Parenting

Minnesota Parent Center, MN PIRC, a project of PACER

National Center for Parents as Teachers Minnesota Regional Office

Parenting Resource Center, Inc. – Mower County

Ramsey County Children's and Family Services

Ramsey County MFIP, Young Adult Program

Ready 4K

Somali Action Youth of Minnesota!

Saint Paul Network of Education Action Teams (NEAT)

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota honors . . .

For her commitment to ending domestic violence:

Donna LaDuke of Warroad, MN (Rep. Olin and Sen. Stumpf)

For her commitment to strengthening families in recovery:

Mary Ann Turner of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Simon and Sen. Latz)

For his commitment to strengthening families and preventing child abuse:

Vant Washington of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Loeffler and Sen. Pogemiller)

For their commitment to family and the Somali community:

Farhiya Khalif of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Loeffler and Sen. Bluhm)

Saciido Shaie of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Loeffler and Sen. Bluhm)

Iman Mohamud of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Loeffler and Sen. Bluhm)

Amal Ali of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Loeffler and Sen. Bluhm)

For partnering with parents to strengthen families:

Kevin Perez of South St. Paul, MN (Rep. Bigham and Sen. Sieben)

Ana Perez of South St. Paul, MN (Rep. Bigham and Sen. Sieben)

Carole Wilcox Johnson of Maplewood, MN (Rep. Slawik and Sen. Wiger)

For their commitment to families in the Hmong community:

Sydney Chang of Brooklyn Park, MN (Rep. Hortman and Sen. Foley)

Mai Nhia Lor of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Sheldon and Sen. Mee Moua)

Mai Bliia Vang of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Sheldon and Sen. Mee Moua)

Kate B. Lee of Oakdale, MN (Rep. Slawik and Sen. Wiger)

For their commitment to children in the African American community:

Thesban Green of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Lesch and Sen. Ellen Anderson)

Maureen Brazil-Sawyer of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Cy Thao and Sen. Pappas)

For his dedication to helping children:

Tommie Clark of Crystal, MN (Rep. Lyndon and Sen. Torres-Ray)

For his commitment to children and community:

Rekoe Howard of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Mahoney and Sen. Mee Moua)

For their commitment to children, families, and education:

Jacquelyn Thomas of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Cy Thao and Sen. Pappas)

Bernita Givens-Osborn of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Mariani and Sen. Pappas)

Theresa Davis of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Cy Thao and Sen. Pappas)

For being a devoted father and an advocate for Head Start parents:

Tom Narog of Coon Rapids, MN (Rep. Hortman)

For her commitment to family support practices and families in her community:

Lynn Ealy of Crystal, MN (Rep. Carlson and Sen. Rest)

For their commitment to family and community:

Billy Hawkins of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Wagenius and Sen. Torres-Ray)

Keith Cook of Minneapolis, MN (Rep. Clark and Sen. Berglin)

JanMarie Weidenbach of Little Falls, MN (Rep. Doty and Sen. Koering)

Thandi Al-Ahad of St. Paul, MN (Rep. Mahoney and Sen. Mee Moua)

Honoree Biographies

Donna LaDuke of Warroad, MN – Nominated by Dara Carlin, M.A., Domestic Violence Survivor Advocate

In October of 2005, Donna LaDuke and her husband, Steve, received a phone call that is every parent's worst nightmare: Steve's daughter, Felicia, had been killed. Worse news was how she had been killed; not on-mission while in Iraq, not in an accident, but by the hands of her baby's father. Next came the fight of their lives: getting their one and only grandson they'll ever have by Felicia out of Hawaii's state foster care system. Over a year later, they finally were able to bring little Elijah home where he belonged. Being able to successfully adopt Elijah is not why I'm nominating Donna for this award. It's because of what she's done for others and achieved as a result of this tragedy that has been so much more. Determined to honor Felicia's memory and educate others about what led to her stepdaughter's untimely death, Donna worked with The Sheila Wellstone Institute to create a digital storytelling DVD about domestic violence and has spoken about domestic violence in front of audiences ranging from an elementary school class to members of Congress in Washington, DC. Four years later, Donna's resolve, determination and commitment to end domestic violence remains passionate, and despite domestic violence being a very uncomfortable issue to address, Donna has stood undeterred and undiscouraged in delivering what could very well be life-saving information for those who hear her.

Mary Ann Turner of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Heather Kilgore of Minnesota Parent Center, MN PIRC

The Center's mission is to help chemically-dependent parents recover while at the same time strengthening their families, restoring their dignity, and creating hope. In her capacity as a case manager at Perspectives Family Center, Ms. Turner regularly provides this service by operating from a strengths-based approach in her work with parents. She communicates a belief in their abilities, holds them accountable for their responsibilities, and provides opportunities to build their capacity. Our professional relationship with Ms. Turner allows us to witness her ongoing efforts with families and their results – parents made stronger through discovering and building upon their assets, and children living in stable homes. We've had the great pleasure of hosting Ms. Turner and parents with whom she works at our statewide conference the last two years. She exemplifies parent leadership by currently caring for her own grandchildren, as well as passing on her wisdom to many parents through her work.

Vant Washington of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Linda Fancher

I have known Vant Washington for over 20 years. During this time, he has always worked for the betterment and strengthening of families. Mr. Washington was a single father and successfully, with the help of family and friends, raised two self-sufficient and responsible young ladies. He is presently co-parenting an 18 year old son who is totally involved in activities that his father supports him in doing. He has worked with 4-H in Washington and Hennepin Counties and with students at the Minnesota State Fair. He has served on committees working on initiatives for Domestic Violence Awareness and has trained students in various schools on the use of restorative measures as a way of resolving conflicts. He has committed his life to supporting the needs of youth and their families. He goes beyond what is expected of him without expecting anything in return. He has had this on-going commitment for over 20 years. For the past 15 years he has been responsible for Youth Ministry at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. His present position is that of a Youth Educator with Family and Children Services of Minneapolis.

Farhiya Khalif of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Saciido Shaie

Farhiya is a very active and hardworking mother, a wife, and a great leader in the Somali community. Since 1997, Farhiya has worked with the community tremendously and helped advocate for many people. As an Immigrant, Farhiya has faced many challenges, but because she is a hardworking woman, she has overcome most of the challenges and is now happily married with three beautiful children. Farhiya is a former Teacher of Islamic Studies and sits on different boards. I personally nominated Farhiya because deep down I know that she deserves this nomination.

Saciido Shaie of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Iman Mohamud

Saciido Shaie, Co-founder, President, and Executive Director of Somali Youth Action of MN! Saciido Shaie was born in Somali and came to America with her family in 1992 as a refugee. She is a mother of three and a College student at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. She is a former teacher of Arabic and Islamic studies at Abu-Bakr al-Sadiq Islamic Center. Saciido has been a community leader and political activist for the last 10 years, and the recipient of the 2006 National Community Award. She also served as a board member for Somali Action Alliance and Abu-Bakr al-Sadiq Islamic Center. She sits on the Parent Partnership Committee for Child Safety and Permanency with the Department of Human Services and Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota.

Iman Mohamud of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Farhiya Khalif

Iman was born and raised in Somali and came to America for a better life. She is a mother of four, a wife, an advocate, and a leader. Iman used to work and volunteer at the Somali Community of Minnesota and as a result of that hard work, she received an Outstanding Achievement Award by SCMN and Tree Trust as well as community support program. Also, as hard working as she is, she was awarded a homework and after school helper at a Washington Courts by the International Education Center. Iman worked with family wellness and early childhood and was also nominated to receive an award. Iman resides in North East Minneapolis with her lovely family!

Amal Ali of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Saciido Shaie

Amal is the founder of Amallina, a highly successful company. She is also a great leader, a mother, and an active woman in our community. She is a professional Henna designer and a business woman. She puts most of her time towards helping people and motivating women to stand up for their people. I personally nominated Amal because I know that she has a great deal to bring to the table.

Kevin and Ana Perez of South Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Marisol Chiclana Ayala, Ramsey County Diversity Trainer of Latino Parents

For the last 20 years, Ana and Kevin have worked really hard to provide support to Latino individuals/families with disabilities. In their formal job, they administer a non-profit organization that was created by them to provide information, resources, support, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities in the Latino Community. Their dedication and commitment to the work is amazing! In their free/personal time, Ana and Kevin are always on the run, helping parents with their children, giving parents "a break" so they can calm themselves down or have some time for themselves for a change. I think that with that, they help prevent child abuse and neglect. The Latino parents Ana and Kevin help (provide advice and give "a break") often experience a lot of stress because of a series of barriers they deal with every day (English proficiency, medical systems, other governmental agencies processes, etc.). These parents do not have, in many cases, the support of family members and or friends to help them deal with their daily stresses and responsibilities. That is when Ana's and Kevin's personal time is truly a gift for those families they help on a regular basis. So, Ana and Kevin help families formally in their office with paperwork, translations, and assistance in processes, requests, etc. and also support these and many other parents and families by sharing some of their personal time with them providing childcare, giving parents a couple hours for themselves, or simply listening to their personal problems and providing advice = parent peer support.

Carole Wilcox Johnson of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Statewide Parent Leadership Child Safety and Permanency

Carole is the Supervisor of Prevention and Research with Minnesota's Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency area, where she provides supervision and guidance on the Children's Trust Fund prevention efforts and on the evaluation of child welfare data. Prior to her current position, Carole was a project specialist with the Children's Justice Initiative – Alcohol and Other Drugs Project, where she worked with the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Chemical Health area, and Child Safety and Permanency area as well as Parent Leader Consultants to ensure that children involved in the juvenile protection court system had safe, stable, permanent families by improving parental and family recovery from alcohol and other drug problems. Carole also co-led the implementation of Family Assessment Response, which is a strength-based family centered approach to child protection assessment, and was instrumental in developing early intervention programs such as the

Parent Support Outreach Program and the MFIP/Family Connections Program. As a long-time public servant, Carole assures the voice of parents is heard and partnerships are developed. She is dedicated to shared leadership to improve the circumstances and outcomes for children and their families in Minnesota.

Sydney Chang of Brooklyn Park, MN – Nominated by Soua Lee of Hmong American Partnership

Sydney works full time as a Career Specialist at Rogers High School. She received her Master of Arts in Counseling Degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Sydney spent three years to complete her degree while she worked full time as a Bilingual Specialist and fulfilled her duties as a mother of four children. Sydney has endurance and determination in being an active community member, parent leader, learner, and worker. In the past, she has been a part of the Hmong Women Society in Sheboygan and she was a Fellowship Coordinator at her church. Sydney and her family moved to Minnesota in 2007 and purchased a home in Brooklyn Park. I think she is a super woman!

Mai Nhia Lor of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Soua Lee of Hmong American Partnership

Mai graduated from Highland Park High School in June 2000. She has been working since her high school years in the social service area (including organizations like Target Direct, Lifetrack Resources, and Way to Grow). On the side, she is a doula, helping pregnant women deal with their pregnancy through support, education, and resources. Mai is an active member of the Twin Cities Hmong community and has been involved with many programs and events in the past. Mai got married in high school, and altogether, has three children. She managed to obtain a good job that provided well for her family despite a lack of a higher education. Mai recently divorced, but is now happily married to her husband. Unfortunately, she lost her job a few months ago. Despite all that, she keeps her spirits up by being a great mother to her kids, taking care of the home, watering her plants, and planning to apply for college, to start a degree in Social Work. Most importantly, Mai is pregnant. This factor might sound stressful given a tough financial situation, but Mai had never rested from employment until this time.

Mia Blia Vang of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Soua Lee of Hmong American Partnership

In high school, Mai Blia was extremely active in the National Honor Society. Mai Blia started her Nursing program as a full time student at St. Kate's in the Fall of 2008. Her husband works full time. She has a one-year old named Sophie. She doesn't have many people around to help her, but she gives a lot of help to help others. Mai Blia has been successful in being a student, mother, daughter-in-law, wife, and participant at HAP's Family & Community Partnership Program. I believe Mai Blia is a very strong woman.

Kate B. Lee of Oakdale, MN – Nominated by Soua Lee of Hmong American Partnership

Kate completed her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice in May 2005 at Concordia University, Saint Paul. She is currently working on her Master in Finance and is expected to graduate in the winter of 2011. Kate has been married for 10 years, and she has two children (Ethan and Faith). Kate attends the church called Followers of Christ Hmong Baptist Church (FCHBC) in Saint Paul, MN. She is active in her church and participates in the following roles: Associate Sunday School Director, Co-Song Leader for Women's Fellowship group, Fundraising Coordinator for Church Building Fund Committee, Acteens Representative for WMU (Women's Missionary United). Kate teaches grades 1-3 at FCHBC. Kate has been at Rasmussen College for three years. Her job is a Financial Aid Officer. Kate loves kids. She enjoys time with her family, especially when Ethan plays football with his league.

Thesban Green of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Jacquelyn Thomas

Thesban Green is a dedicated parent that works hard in his child's school and in the community to help African American males defuse conflict by mentoring and doing whatever else he can do to aid in raising the African American males to be accepted, respected, and have successful lives.

Maureen Brazil-Sawyer of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Jacquelyn Thomas

Maureen Brazil-Sawyer is a dedicated parent that works hard at raising African American children's education to a level of success and onward to graduation, and higher education. She is working in the schools as well as the community. She currently works at Jackson Elementary, sits on Parents of African American Students Advisory Council with Saint Paul Public Schools. She also is co-facilitator of The Circle of Parents® Children's Program African American Education Youth Global Leadership.

Tommie Clark of Crystal, MN – Nominated by Network for the Development of Children of African Descent

Tommie is a father of two who is dedicated to helping our children. The Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD) gives away free books to children every Saturday. Tommie is the life and success of the program; he is invaluable, reliable and passionate about the education of our children.

Rekoe Howard of Saint Paul – Nominated by Charles Dixon, YouthLEAD Supervisor of Young Dads

Rekoe was the leading force around our new organization project called S.U.P.E.R.M.A.N. (Strengthening Underprivileged People (thru) Education Resource Male Achievement Network). He has demonstrated his moral values time and time again during our endeavors. He has overcome his own adversities while helping others around him overcome theirs. His character speaks for itself. He is humble, articulate, and yet self-aware when he needs to correct or check himself. This is a great attribute! Rekoe is also a custodian single father who plays a healthy role in his kids' upbringing. He is always involved in their schools and their after-hours curriculums, pushing them positively to reach their goals and a higher standard.

Jacquelyn Thomas of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Victoria La Berge, Saint Paul Network of Education Action Teams

Jacquelyn Thomas is a proud African American woman who strives each day to be the best parent, daughter, sister, and friend that she can possibly be. She sets out each day to encourage all parents, one by one, to be involved in their children's lives and particularly their education. She also tries to provide parents with the tools needed to advocate for their child to receive a premier education. She served a two-year term as President of Saint Paul Network of Education Action Teams (NEAT). She is a sitting member of: Ramsey County Citizen's Advisory Council, Parents of African American Students Advisory Council of Saint Paul Public School's ISD 625, Circle of Parents[®] Leadership Team, and Saint Paul NEAT. She is also the Lead Facilitator of The Circle of Parents[®] Children's Program African American Education Youth Global Leadership.

Bernita Givens-Osborn of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Tim White of Ramsey County Human Services

Bernita, Mother, Grandmother, Aunt, Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent. For the past 15 years Bernita has devoted her entire life to make a difference in children lives. The primary nucleus of her legacy is and has been empowering youth through education. Bernita has provided care for approximately 25 foster youth. Bernita maximizes her provider skills through providing a safe nurturing environment that builds on the growth potential of youth and gives them the self esteem that allows them to face and address the challenges that sustain their integrity. The most important quality that is the foundation of Bernita's legacy is LOVE. Bernita loves children period. Bernita is an expert in not only accessing resources in the Child Welfare system, but linking foster youth to community resources in the Twin Cities. Bernita has done all these things for children and families on the down/low, never ever bragging about her accomplishments, always being humble and only concerned with helping children and families.

Theresa Davis of Saint Paul, MN – Nominated by Statewide Parent Leadership Child Safety and Permanency

Theresa Davis has worked for the State of Minnesota for 20+ years, always in areas that promote the healthy development of children and community empowerment. Theresa is currently Program Specialist for the Children's Trust Fund, and in that role develops training for grantees and Child Abuse Prevention Councils. She also is the staff liaison to the Parent Team and works to bring technical assistance and training and support to volunteer Parent Consultants and Department of Human Services staff. One of her basic beliefs is that knowledge is power, and that a knowledgeable community can leverage the resources needed for positive change.

Tom Narog of Coon Rapids, MN – Nominated by Jenica Erbes Spoor ,Anoka County Community Action Program – Head Start

Tom is a current Head Start parent in the Anoka/Washington County Head Start Program. Even with his hands full raising his daughter, Tom always gives 100% back to Head Start children and fellow families. He applies his compassion and talents to the classroom by being an active parent volunteer. Tom supports his daughter's class and engages positively with the children throughout the time he is volunteering. Additionally, Tom serves on our Policy Council and represents our agency at Minnesota Head Start Association (MHSA) meetings throughout the state as our State Parent Affiliate (SPA). During these meetings, Tom gains new skills and learns new information, which he reports back and shares with Head Start parents. Tom strives to gain self-sufficiency for himself and encourages other parents to do the same. Tom and his daughter participate in many Head Start family activities together. Tom continuously seeks ways for him and his daughter to learn and grow together. His leadership skills are observed by his encouragement and support of others to actively participate in their child's educational journey. Tom is a highly compassionate person who gives back to his community by providing outstanding parent leadership qualities. Tom is a walking testimony for Circle of Parents and Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota. I believe that Tom's qualities make a difference in the life of his daughter and others in our program.

Lynn Ealy of Crystal, MN – Nominated by Sandi Cary of Parents In Community Action (PICA) Head Start

Lynn was a recent divorcee with four children, who relocated from Atlanta, Georgia back to Minnesota. She had no idea how her life and income would drastically change. She attended college and just knew she could make it! She currently holds the position of Policy Council Delegate for PICA Helen Taylor Center. Before that, she was Center Committee Chair and elected to be the Policy Council representative for the Helen Taylor Center. She loves participating with events that promote and introduces PICA to the community. She has represented PICA at the 2007 Urban League Parade, the 2008 Juneteenth celebration, and the Minneapolis Aquatennial Parade. She received PICA's Parent of the Year Award for 2007-08 for her 942 hours of volunteer work at PICA. She participated on the Health Advisory Committee, my Center's Open House planning, Financial PRISM review, Parent/Child time, Bus Riding, Child Development Training, Legislator letter writing, the Planning and Evaluation Committee for the Policy Council and other various projects and events with PICA.

Billy Hawkins of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Jack Strawder, Parent Educator of Urban Ventures

Mr. Hawkins has been an active participant in Urban Ventures Family Time Parenting Program since May 2009. He has equipped himself with the skills necessary to strengthen the relationship between himself and his children. He continues to stay focused by frequently attending a MADD DAD'S support group, which identifies problems in the community and takes aggressive measures to address them. Billy is empowered to take back his responsibilities as head of the household and community. He volunteers his time to assist in many activities. Mr. Hawkins has changed his life by finishing a long term C.D. treatment program (Teen Challenge) and living in recovery. He is now attending college and working on building relationships with his family and children, understanding being a man is showing responsibility through his positive examples.

Keith Cook of Minneapolis, MN – Nominated by Jack Strawder- Parent Educator of Urban Ventures

Mr. Cook has been an active participant in Urban Ventures Family Time Parenting Program since October 2009. He has equipped himself with the skills to help strengthen the relationship between himself and his children. He graduated from the parenting classes in November 2009 and has continued to stay focused by attending frequent MADD DAD'S support groups. He is empowered to take back his responsibilities as head of the household and community. Mr. Cook is working with courts to regain family time with his children; we are working with him and believe that he is committed to positive communication, unconditional love, and the desire to have healthy parenting tools at his disposal. Keith is working continuously to be the responsible role model for his children to follow.

JanMarie Weidenbach of Little Falls, MN – Nominated by Joan Johnson & Melanie Erickson of Circle of Parents®

Jan and her husband are the parents of 12 children. She volunteers in a number of ways in our community. She has been the most significant force behind Morrison County beginning and maintaining the Circle of Parents® support groups. Jan has volunteered her time as a Board Member and Secretary of the Morrison County Child Protection Team for over nine years. She is also a parent educator, and has spent the last three years devoting additional time to set-up, maintenance, and promotion of the Circle of Parents® Support Groups. She has expanded one group that was meeting twice a month to five groups that meet each week. Including two groups that meet at the Morrison County Jail, these groups are voluntary and open to inmates. She does all this with passion, and to quote her, “I think I am doing exactly what I am supposed to be doing at this time in my life. It is why I am here.”

Thandi Al-Ahad of Saint Paul – Nominated by Network for the Development of Children of African Descent

Thandi is a childcare provider, in addition to having her own five children. She represents one of the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa which is Ujima (oo-JEE-mah), meaning, Collective Work and Responsibility: To build and maintain our community together and to make our brother’s and sister’s problems our problems, and to solve them together. Thandi is truly selfless when it comes to caring and loving our children.



For more information about activities related to National Parent Leadership Month, please contact Circle of Parents® Minnesota, 1821 University Avenue, Suite 202-S, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104. The contact person is Roxy Foster, Director of Civic Parent Leadership, at 651-523-0099 ext 118 or email rfoster@pcamn.org. Visit our website at www.pcamn.org.