

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services 600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 27, 2015

For more information, contact: LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892 or Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933

Families and Individuals Honored with Adoption Awards

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Dalrymple has proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month. To celebrate, the North Dakota Department of Human Services and licensed child placing agencies have recognized individuals who have strengthened their families through adoption as well as advocates and other professionals whose work supports adoptions.

Andrea Olson of Grand Forks was presented with the *Adoption Advocate Award*. Olson is a school social worker in Grand Forks Public Schools. As an Adults Adopting Special Kids worker for nearly eight years, Olson completed over 100 adoption finalizations. She has become an adoption expert in the Grand Forks region by upholding federal and state policies as they relate to the placement of children.

The *North Dakota Foster Care Adoptive Family Award* was presented to two families who have adopted children from foster care. **Rod and Mandy Burman of Dickinson** became foster parents to twin boys in the fall of 2011 and later the twins' sister joined the family through a foster care placement. The Burmans adopted all three children in September 2015 and have provided permanency, belonging, security, and safety while valuing the importance of the children's biological family.

Jason and Michelle Westbrook of Bismarck also received the *North Dakota Foster Care Adoptive Family Award*. The Westbrocks adopted a child from foster care and started *Miles with Meaning*, an effort to raise money for charities that provide services to victims of child abuse. Participants in *Miles with Meaning* make a monetary donation for each mile they complete in running, walking, swimming, skiing, or other physical activities.

Dimitry Bashmakov of Maddock received the *Youth Excellence Award*, which is presented to young adults formerly in foster care who have excelled and are contributing to their communities. Bashmakov was adopted in May 2012 and plans on attending college to pursue a career that allows him to help people.

Last year, 303 adoptions took place in North Dakota. Of the adopted children, 124 were adopted from foster care; seven were from foreign countries; 31 were placed for adoption by a private licensed child placing agency; and 141 children were adopted by their stepparents.

Families and individuals interested in exploring adoption can contact one of the following licensed child placing agencies in North Dakota: Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK), All About U Adoptions, Catholic Charities ND, Lutheran Social Services of ND, The Village Family Service Center, Christian Family Life Services, God's Children Adoption Agency, Inc., and PATH ND. These agencies provide services including family recruitment, preparation and assessment, placement, and post-placement support. Contact information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/agencies.html.

-MORE-

The Adoption Awareness Proclamation is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/.

The Department of Human Services is the lead agency that oversees adoptions and licensing of all private adoption agencies in the state. Individuals interested in adoption and foster care information, should contact the department's Children and Family Services Division at 701-328-2316, toll-free 1-800-245-3736, ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888, e-mail dhscfs@nd.gov or visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/.

###