

**News from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505-0250**

Contacts: Dawn Pearson, Independent Living Program Administrator, Children and Family Services Division, 701-328-1018, or Heather Steffl, Public Information Officer, 701-328-4933 or 701-527-7445.

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Williston area residents honored at child welfare conference

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services honored two Williston area women for outstanding work in foster care and child welfare services. Susan Ehlis who works for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s Division of Juvenile Services and Karen Luther, program director of Eckert Youth Homes, were among 12 individuals who received awards today at the 2007 Children and Family Services Conference in Bismarck.

Ehlis was named the 2007 Outstanding Foster Care Worker, and Luther received the Outstanding Professional Associated with the Child Welfare System Award. Award recipients were nominated and selected by peers for their efforts to support foster children and their families.

“The award recipients exemplify the best of the best,” said Dawn Pearson of the department’s Children and Family Services Division. “They have been singled out for their abilities to develop effective relationships with children, families, and partners in the child welfare system; their commitment to their work and clients; their advocacy on behalf of children and families while focusing on the best interests of children; and their dedication to family reunification and other permanent planned living arrangements for foster children.”

Ehlis works closely with youth in the Williston region. She is involved in several local committees and task forces that focus on serving youth and their families, including one devoted to the rights of foster youth in care.

Luther was praised for her creativity in meeting the individual needs of the teens residing at the family-oriented residential facility that serves foster children and their families by providing shelter for children, family counseling; group counseling; treatment services; crisis intervention, and related services. She is currently director of the National Association of Social Workers’ Board. She is active locally sharing information about child welfare issues with civic clubs, churches, and schools and is a foster parent herself.

In North Dakota, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations – Division of Juvenile Services, counties, private agencies, the Tribes, and foster parents provide child welfare services. On any given day, about 1,400 children are in foster care in the state – many as a result of abuse or neglect situations.

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