

5th Annual

J.C. Montgomery Child Safety Awards

November 20, 2015



Texas Office for Prevention
of Developmental Disabilities

Minding the Minds of Children



Welcome

Welcome!

On behalf of the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities (TOPDD) staff and the Executive Committee, welcome to the 5th Annual J.C. Montgomery Child Safety Awards!

Thank you for joining us in honoring these amazing individuals and organizations. We deeply appreciate that you have made the effort to be with us today in recognizing the importance of child safety and the leaders in this endeavor.



Ashley Givens
Child Safety Award Chair



Event Schedule

November 20, 2015

10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Lieutenant Governor's Reception Room

Texas State Capitol

10:00 a.m. **Welcome**

10:15 a.m. **Award Presentations**

11:30 a.m. **Closing**

Brief History of the Award

Child safety is a topic that many people don't give much thought to. However, in a split second a brain injury can cause developmental disabilities that are life changing. Fortunately, Texas has outstanding individuals and organizations, such as those who are being recognized today, that are determined to empower communities, families and individuals to recognize childhood brain injury as the epidemic it is and to promote child safety.

TOPDD developed the J.C. Montgomery Awards program to highlight the importance of child safety in everyday life and recognize outstanding individuals and organizations who are leaders in this work. The award was named in honor of J. C. Montgomery of Texas Scottish Rite Hospital, a tireless champion of child safety and former Chairperson of TOPDD's Executive Committee. Whether one's role specifically involves child safety or not, child safety is everyone's job. We hope that today's event will inspire you in this important endeavor. Together, we can make our state a safer place for every child in Texas.

2015 Award Recipients

J.C. Montgomery Youth Advocacy Award

- **Will Mina**

J.C. Montgomery Child Safety Award

- **Coach George Block**
- **State Representative Sarah Davis**
- **Alisa De Luna**
- **Sarah Duzinski**
- **Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.**
- **Dr. Elaine Parker Adams**
- **Peaks and Ladders, Inc.**
- **Cherie Stanley**
- **Senator Judith Zaffirini**
- **Dolores G. Zarate**

Will Mina

Youth Advocacy Award

Will Mina is a young trailblazer and future leader. He has the courage and determination to beat any odds in order to make a difference, and he started by making a difference in his community.

Will demonstrated extraordinary leadership in child safety. Concerned about safety risks caused by the heavy traffic around his school, Will thought that they needed a cross walk and a crossing guard to help the children arrive to school safely. However, unlike most concerned citizens, especially those who are 11 and a half, like himself, Will decided to take action. After some study, he learned that the City Council made these decisions and he learned about the process for speaking at a Council meeting.

Unintimidated and determined, Will entered a room filled with adults, followed the process for addressing the council members and brought his cause to their attention. Within 2 weeks the council took action. It is interesting to note that local neighborhood associations had been pleading with the council to do this for five years, but it wasn't until they heard from Will that they were moved. Will demonstrates the power of the voice of youth in safety and the community. Will's heroic actions improved safety for countless children in his community.

Will Mina is an eleven and a half years old leader who attends the 6th Grade at Merriman Park Elementary School in Dallas, Texas. His favorite subject in school is math and when he grows up he wants to be an elementary school teacher. If Will could make other changes to keep children safe, he would like to have speed bumps installed, and not just in his school zone, but in every school zone.

Coach George Block

A founder and Board Member of San Antonio Sports, the developers of VIVA SWIM For Life program led by University Health System

Coach George Block has a national and international reputation in world of swim that spurred his interest in making swimming accessible to all children in the San Antonio area.

Coach Block is currently a board member of San Antonio Sports and President of the World Swimming Coaches Association. He previously served as Vice-President of USA Swimming. Coach Block is also the former Director of Aquatics and Assistant Director of Athletics with Northside School District. Over the last three decades, he developed 8 Olympians in three different sports, 50 UIL State Gold Medalists, over 285 All-Americans, Olympic Trials qualifiers, and numerous National and Junior Champions. He has also produced Olympic swimmers from the United States, Algeria, Egypt, and Nicaragua. Coach Block has received numerous awards and recognitions including the Silver Award of Excellence from USA Swimming and he was named the Top Aquatics Director of the Northside Aquatics Center by the United States Water Fitness Association.

These extraordinary experiences positioned him for his crowning achievements as a founder of San Antonio Sports which developed VIVA SWIM for Life, a safety and education program for children and their families. Concerned that many disadvantaged families did not have the same opportunities to learn how to swim, Coach Block was determined to bring swim safety and education to every neighborhood. Thanks to VIVA SWIM for Life every public pool in San Antonio offers free swimming lessons, including the George Block Aquatics Center. The Viva Swim program was designed to celebrate swimming while connecting children and families to swim lessons, swim clubs and special events to engage families in the sport of swimming. Participation in formal swim lessons reduces the risk of drowning by 88% among children age 1-4. In the summer of 2015, San Antonio Sports' Viva Swim for Life offered free lessons to 4,000 children in San Antonio's public pools. Coach Block saves lives and enriches lives every day through this wonderful program.

State Representative Sarah Davis

Attorney and Representative of Texas District 134

Representative Sarah Davis stands out in 2015 for authoring and co-authoring strong legislation to improve healthy pregnancies, healthy infant development, and health services. She collaborated with Texas Medical Association, March of Dimes, hospitals and physicians to write a strong and impactful bill that will launch a new program with a center of excellence designation to focus on healthy fetal outcomes in the state. This bill will establish an advanced maternal, neonatal care and surgical center that also provides counseling, prenatal care, and on-going post-natal care to new and expecting mothers. She also authored a bill that will guide a research study to explore the benefits of pre-natal and post-natal surgical procedures to treat birth defects.

As a member of Article II, Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the House Appropriations committee, Representative Davis supported significant improvements to the budget impacting the Texas Health and Human Services department. These changes included fully funding programs that provide physical and mental health services to children in economically disadvantaged households and increased funding, statewide, in mental health services and in substance abuse services. Representative Davis is implementing changes to improve prenatal and postnatal services for pregnant women in order to reduce injury and improve neonatal development for healthy Texas babies.

Alisa De Luna

Executive Director of CASA
of Williamson County

Alisa De Luna is dedicated to preventing child abuse and helping families rebound from crisis. In the last three years, she worked with local elected officials to find ways to improve the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) agency and the child welfare system. She provided counsel and advice throughout the Sunset Process and during the 84th legislation session. She was an important voice for several pieces of legislation aimed at improving outcomes for children in the custody of the state. Through her tireless advocacy, she developed connections both state-wide and in her local community, which has enabled her to be a trusted friend and asset to policy makers and her contacts within DFPS.

Alisa De Luna serves as the Executive Director for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Williamson County and as a Regional Representative to the Texas CASA Board of Directors. Previously, she worked briefly as a Financial Advisor with Edward Jones and served as a CASA volunteer during her tenure there. She has spent the last 10 years in various fundraising and non-profit management roles in health & human services and arts-related organizations throughout South and Central Texas.

Sarah Duzinski MPH

Research Scientist and Child Abuse Prevention Specialist with
the Trauma Services Department in Dell Children's
Medical Center of Central Texas

Sarah Duzinski is committed to protecting children and preventing abusive head trauma. Inspired by recurrent evidence of the impact of abusive head trauma on infants and young children, she has tirelessly educated professionals on the Period of PURPLE Crying intervention. Sarah Duzinski is leading the movement to promote the Period of Purple Crying and evidence based prevention initiatives across the state to prevent child abuse. She continues to network across the state to promote evidence-based intervention and conduct ongoing research on this prevention strategy.

Sarah has over 15 publications in the field of trauma and injury and has presented findings in local, statewide, and national conferences. As a member of the Prevention Subcommittee of the Child Protection Roundtable, Ms. Duzinski has engaged in successful legislative advocacy for abusive head trauma prevention in Texas. Sarah has trained over 250 Texas health professionals on evidence-based abusive head trauma programming. She is also the founder and lead organizer of Rundberg Rising, an organization that aims to prevent violence and promote self-esteem through youth involvement in community and public art.

Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas Inc.

Private, faith-based, non-profit organization
serving Texans

Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. (MHM) is a major leader in child safety and addressing the growing number of physical health and mental health needs of infants and children in our state. Their programs reach more than 800,000 people every year and positively impact struggling parents and families who need help to provide basic needs for their infants and toddlers. MHM is dedicated to providing medical, dental and health-related human services to low-income and uninsured families and children.

MHM is the largest healthcare system in South Texas, and is also the largest private funding source for community healthcare services that reach underserved communities in the South. They provide funds to 75 partners who, in turn, provide direct physical and mental health services for infants, toddlers, children, teens and families. The Wesley Nurse Health Ministries (WNHM) program is the largest outreach program under MHM and they serve 80 different counties, reaching families living in rural parts of Texas to address economical and geographical disparities. MHM strengthens the capacity of other organization to provide services and increases access for services to this vulnerable population.

They continue to expand their reach across the state in order to reach those most in need. MHM's policy office looks to identify needed improvements in health and human services and in the availability of programs offering meaningful physical and mental health services for those who are underserved in south Texas.

Dr. Elaine Parker Adams

Psychologist, Author,
Educator, and State-Wide Advocate

Dr. Elaine Parker Adams is dedicated to helping traumatic brain injury (TBI) survivors and their families achieve improved outcomes and receive quality care and accessible services. Using her professional background as an educator and her first-hand knowledge as the mother of a young son who sustained a severe TBI, Dr. Adams is doing everything in her power to prevent further trauma in people who have experienced a brain injury and ensure that their needs are met in times of crisis. She has connected with elected officials, emergency first responders, schools, Parent-Teacher, newspapers, organizations, and the general public to educate on the importance of preventing brain injuries and how to recognize the signs and symptoms of TBI. She spearheaded the development and distribution of brain injury survivor wallet cards that are used statewide. She also worked with the Office of Acquired Brain Injury to develop an online state-accredited courses on brain injury awareness.

Dr. Adams was instrumental in the development of the brain injury communication manual for 2-1-1 Texas, and the required training course for 2-1-1 employees. She also helped develop and produce, "Making a Difference - A Guide for brain injury survivors, family members, caregivers, including military and veteran families." After the Joplin tornado in 2011 that devastated Joplin, Missouri, the Missouri State Health Department requested 600 copies of this manual and distributed them to every hospital, medical center, neighborhood clinic and doctor's office in the state. Dr. Adams is a former board member of Disability Rights Texas and former presiding president and board member of the Texas Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council.

Peaks and Ladders, Inc.

Multi-organizational coalition from the City of Fort Worth

Peaks and Ladders is a collaboration between Cook Children's, Fort Worth Fire Department and Fort Worth Firefighter Charities that strives to provide their community with equipment, education, and programs on preventable childhood injuries and deaths. This multi-disciplinary coalition began in 2012. That's when Sharon Evans, Injury Prevention Coordinator with the Cook Children's Medical Center, Cameron Brown, Firefighter and Chaplain with the City of Fort Worth Fire Department, and Kenneth T. Freeman, Deputy Chief of the Fort Worth Fire Department met to discuss the rising incidence of child injuries and deaths related to vehicle accidents, bicycle crashes, and drownings. Together, they developed the initial structure of the coalition which quickly grew to include the Fort Worth Firefighter Charities, Tarrant County Office of Emergency Management, Fort Worth Drowning Prevention Coalition, Safe Kids Tarrant County, Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price's Office, the Fort Worth Junior League, and Texas Christian University.

The coalition became known as Peaks and Ladders. "Peaks" represents the blue peaks Cook Children's is known for and "Ladders" represents the Fort Worth Fire Department and Fort Worth Firefighter Charities (FWFFC). In just a few years, Peaks and Ladders initiated many innovative programs to address the need for resources and education for child safety and injury prevention in Fort Worth.

Cherie Stanley

She is an educator, an Instructional Technologist with Warren ISD and a dedicated advocate for children

Cherie Stanley uses her background in education, technology and community involvement and her passion driven by her wonderful and amazing daughter, Annie who has an FASD to mobilize the community to prevent FASD and embrace the children who have an FASD. Cherie has organized “Annie’s Army, which is a group of individuals and organizations which include the Lions Club and the local High School Honor Society who she has educated about FASD so that they can work together to make a difference. She shares her story as an adoptive mom with the press to educate the community about FASD. For the past two years, there has been an amazing outpouring of support for Annie’s Army community awareness events that raise funds for the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities to support its efforts on FASD awareness, education and research.

As Reo. White, who nominated Cherie for this award would certainly attest, Cherie is a tireless champion for legislation related to FASD. She has personally provided testimony about FASD legislation and mobilized “the army” to reach out to their legislators. As an active member of the Steering Committee of the Texas FASD Collaborative that is facilitated by the Texas Office for Prevention, Cherie shares her passion and vision for FASD to have a statewide impact on FASD.

State Senator Judith Zaffirini

Communications Specialist and Texas Senator of the
21st Senatorial District

The Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities would not exist without Senator Judith Zaffirini. A fundraiser and volunteer for persons with intellectual disabilities since she was 15, she passed Senate Bill (SB) 1527 (1989), which created TOPDD, and served on its Executive Committee through 1994.

She also passed bills establishing committee member's training requirements, standards of conduct, and staggered six-year terms. This year she extended TOPDD by amending legislation that would have terminated it.

A lifetime advocate for children, particularly those with developmental disabilities, and child safety, Senator Zaffirini's efforts literally have saved the lives of countless Texas children and improved the quality of life of even more.

Her leadership profoundly improved awareness of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, child safety, and prevention strategies, and her legislation regarding child safety seats (SB 1502, 1993; SB 61, 2009) improved transportation safety and reduced child fatalities in motor vehicle accidents.

Senator Zaffirini's Shots Across Texas bill (SB 266, 1993) established a goal of immunizing all Texas children to age-appropriate levels, and her House Bill 3054 (1997) created Texas' immunization registry, ImmTrac, significantly increased the state's immunization rate. Her SB 1485 (1995) created Child Fatality Review Teams that made children safer by reporting preventable deaths and reducing their occurrence.

Other legislation she authored and passed supports services and protections for runaway, missing, and other at-risk children (SB 1698, 1989; SB 223, 1987).

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee she championed reducing the waiting lists for health and human services and secured funding for prevention services; the Medicaid buy-in program for children with significant medical needs; and the birth defects registry, which helps identify research areas and links families to needed services.

The first Hispanic woman elected to the Texas Senate, Senator Zaffirini has won more than 880 awards for her legislative, public service, and professional work. Her honors include being named Mister South Texas by the Washington's Birthday Celebration Association and Sister Judith, an Honorary Nun, by the Sisters of Mercy. Her incomparable work ethic is illustrated by her casting 55,666 consecutive votes since January, 1987.

The owner of Zaffirini Communications, Dr. Zaffirini holds B.S., M.A., and PhD degrees from The University of Texas, where she was named a Distinguished Alumna and received the Presidential Citation. She has many titles, but her favorite is "wife and mother," and she prefers to be called, simply, "Z." Why? Clearly, she identifies with Zorro—"the friend of the weak, and the poor, and the meek."

Dolores G. Zarate

An attorney and the President and Co-Founder of Down By The Border, Incorporated, an Association Helping Children with Special Needs

Dolores Zarate is a resolute advocate for improved child safety especially for children with special needs. Down By The Border, Incorporated began as a local support group and has grown into a statewide organization. This organization works with special needs children and families and their most latest project is a home-visitation program that provides support and information on proper safety and care techniques to new parents with a baby born with Down Syndrome. Down By The Border, Inc. also partners with local physicians to connect with new parents of babies with special needs so that they can provide the family with additional safety information and support that may foster a brighter future for their child.

As the President of Down By The Border, Dolores executes an annual, large scale awareness event known as the Fall Festival. After six years, the festival has grown to 6,000 attendees. This event focuses on promoting play between children that have disabilities and those who do not. Dolores also participates with local elected officials to advocate for legislation geared towards children with special needs. In 2008, she was instrumental in helping State Representative Eddie Lucio III pass the Medicaid Buy-In Program, which allowed working families to buy into the Medicaid Program for the child in their family who has special needs. She also collaborated on a "Bullying Bill", to make it a felony if the bullying occurred within a public school and was directed towards a student with special needs.

Special Thanks

- Texas Senator Troy Fraser and his office for sponsoring the Lieutenant Governor's Reception Room for the awards ceremony
- Honorable Leticia Van De Putte for her support of the 2015 J.C. Montgomery Child Safety Award ceremony
- State Representative Gilbert Pena for his support of the 2015 J.C. Montgomery Child Safety Award ceremony
- Deciding Committee members of the 2015 J.C. Montgomery Child Safety Award ceremony
- Today's award recipients for their inspiring leadership
- For our award nominators who identified these remarkable people and organizations
- The extraordinary individuals volunteering their time today to support this event
- To all of the guests joining us to celebrate child safety work across Texas

Thank You!

Contact TOPDD

Janet Sharkis, MS	Executive Director
Leah Davies, LMSW	Associate Director
Angela Morales	Director of Operations
Apryl Rosas, LMSW	Mental Health Policy Fellow

For Main Inquiries: (512) 380-4332

For Email Inquiries: TOP@hhsc.state.tx.us

TOPDD Headquarters
6330 E Hwy 290, Suite 360,
Austin, Texas 78723

www.topdd.texas.gov



Facebook



Twitter

Executive Committee :

Dr. Richard Garnett, Chair

Dr. Marian Sokol, Co-chair

Ashley Givens

Dr. Valerie Kiper

State Representative Elliott Naishtat

State Representative Gilbert Pena

Joan Roberts-Scott

Dr. Mary Tijerina



Texas Office for Prevention
of Developmental Disabilities

Minding the Minds of Children

