

Health and Human Services Commission

NEWS RELEASE

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EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER

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Texas Leaders Receive Child Safety Awards

The [Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities](#) will host the Annual J.C. Montgomery Child Safety Awards at **10 a.m., Nov. 20** in the Lieutenant Governor's reception room at the Texas State Capitol.

State Rep. and TOPDD Executive Committee Member Gilbert Pena of Pasadena, former state Sen. Leticia Van de Putte and TOPDD Executive Committee Chairman, Dr. Richard Garnett will present the awards.

Ashley Givens, chair of the Child Safety Awards Committee and a member of the TOPDD Executive Committee of Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas, will emcee the event. The awards will go to legislators, nonprofit leaders, parent activists, a youth leader and community organizations.

The legislators being recognized are:

- State Rep. Sarah Davis of Houston for her leadership in improving healthy pregnancies and mental health services for children;
- State Sen. Judith Zaffirini of Laredo, one of the founders of TOPDD and an advocate for children in the welfare system and children with special needs.

Several nonprofit leaders were selected as awardees:

- George Block a founder of San Antonio Sports and developer of Viva Swim for Life who has demonstrated a life-long commitment to water safety and ensuring all children have the chance to learn how to swim.
- Alisa De Luna, executive director of CASA of Williamson County, an advocate and respected resource for policy makers dedicated to improving the lives of children in state care.
- Sarah Duzinski, a research scientist for Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas in Austin who is a state leader in promoting evidence-based prevention initiatives across the state, including the highly respected Period of Purple Crying program.

- Dolores G. Zarate, president and co-founder of Down on the Border, Inc. (serving San Antonio, Brownsville and Mission.) Zarate organizes a festival for children and is active in public policy work.

TOPDD will recognize two people with professional experience and firsthand knowledge as parents to advocate for change:

- Dr. Elaine Parker Adams of Houston, a psychologist, author and parent of a child with a traumatic brain injury who spearheaded the development and distribution of a brain injury survivor card to be used when brain injury survivors interact with police and first responders. She has been active in developing state and national educational programs.
- Cherie Stanley, of Fred, who is an instructional technologist for a school system, a parent of a child affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, actively raising awareness in her community and a recognized educator, policy advocate and leader on FASDs locally and statewide.

TOPDD will award its first special youth advocate award to Will Mina, an 11-year-old sixth-grader from Dallas, who engaged the Dallas City Council to improve safety around his school.

TOPDD will present awards to two organizations, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. and Fort Worth's Peaks and Ladders, Inc. Methodist Healthcare Ministries' expansive Wesley Nurse Program serves rural communities in 80 different counties in South Texas. Methodist Healthcare Ministries President and CEO Kevin Moriarty will accept the award. Peaks and Ladders, Inc. is a multidisciplinary coalition providing the community with equipment and education to prevent childhood injury and deaths. Coalition co-chair members will accept the award on behalf of Peaks and Ladders: Staff Care Chaplain of Cook Children's Medical Center and Fort Worth Firefighter Cameron Brown; Fort Worth Firefighter and President of Fort Worth Firefighter Charities Michael Drivdahl; Injury Prevention Coordinator with Cook Children's Medical Center Sharon Evans; and Fort Worth Fire Department Deputy Chief Kenneth "K.T." Freeman.

TOPDD seeks to address the underlying causes of preventable disabilities, which includes preventing child injuries, promoting healthy pregnancies and encouraging health and wellness. It developed the child safety awards to spotlight the range of innovative approaches to promoting child safety and to recognize the leaders who are spearheading these efforts.

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