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Foster Youth Graduation honors academic success of state youths

(MADISON) – Thirty-two former foster care youths were honored for their academic achievements at a unique graduation party yesterday hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF). First Lady Tonette Walker and DCF Deputy Secretary Ron Hunt presided over the celebration, which was held at the Executive Residence, recognizing the youths for their recent graduations from high school, milestones completed in post-secondary education, or other educational achievements.

Graduates from more than 30 different Wisconsin high schools, one technical college and three universities were on hand to mark their special achievement. Three other former foster youth who completed their Certified Nursing Assistant certification were also honored for reaching commencement.

"This event is a heartwarming way to honor the accomplishments of these young graduates," said First Lady Tonette Walker. "Foster youth often have a difficult time achieving academically due to the traumatic experiences they have had to overcome, so it's especially important to recognize those who have successfully completed school. These young people serve as role models to other foster youth, as well as to the rest of us."

Nationally, only about 54% of foster youth will graduate from high school and only 2% will go onto college. Most suffer not only the loss of their biological family, but have had to face multiple foster home moves, changes in case workers and being uprooted from friends and schools. On average, foster kids will move six times between kindergarten and 12th grade.

"These students prove that despite whatever hardships a person might face, you can still achieve your goals through hard work, determination and perseverance," said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson.

For more information on Wisconsin's foster care services or to find out how you can be a foster parent, please visit the Department of Children and Families website at: www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/ or visit the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families website to learn more about how you can be a foster parent at: www.fosterparentsrock.org.