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Governor's Outstanding Adoptive Parent Awards presented

(MADISON) — The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) honored five special adoptive families today by presenting them with the 2018 Governor's Outstanding Adoptive Award. The awards were presented during a celebration at the State Capitol as part of Wisconsin's month-long recognition of National Adoption Month.

The awards recognize Wisconsin families who have opened their hearts to provide safe and loving homes to children in need of a permanent home. Nominations were received from adoption workers, children's advocates, and citizens from all corners of Wisconsin, with recipients chosen based upon their stories of exceptional dedication and commitment in ensuring their adopted children receive the love and care of a "forever" family.

"All adoptive families deserve special recognition," said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson. "In our state this year, hundreds of children in Wisconsin have been provided with a permanent home by families and individuals who have stepped forward and made a difference in children's lives. We appreciate the dedication of adoptive parents, as well as those who work closely with families when they go through the adoption process."

Five adoptive families received awards:

Valerie and Gary Berlik of Wausau were recognized for their commitment to keeping a sibling group together and for their specialized skills working with children who have medical and other special needs. The Berliks have one adopted son and are in the process of adopting his sibling.

Deborah and Carl Brehm of Oconomowoc were recognized for the love and compassion that extends beyond their immediate family, which can be seen in the strong relationships they have built with their children's biological parents. The Brehms have adopted six children through public and international adoption.

Lisa and Allan Castelli of Pleasant Prairie were recognized for opening their heart and home to provide a safe and stable environment for sibling groups and for building lasting relationships with their biological parents. The Castellis have three biological children and five adopted children.

Lisa and Jesse Gander of Larsen were recognized for their trauma-informed parenting, as well as their passion for helping children in need of special care. The Ganders have two biological children and one adopted son.

Tiffany Torrens of Wausau was recognized for her ability to always rise and meet the needs of children who deal with multiple challenges. She has also been an amazing resource for other adoptive parents by providing support, referrals and a listening ear. She has one biological child and three adopted children.

Although many Wisconsin families have made the commitment to adopt children, the event highlighted the need for more families to step forward to create these unique and special families through adoption.

Anderson also recognized Jockey International and its corporate initiative, *Jockey Being Family*. The initiative provides funding, employee volunteers, and in-kind donations in support of post-adoption services in Wisconsin and throughout the United States.

For more information about adoption, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/adoption> or follow [@WisDCF](https://twitter.com/WisDCF) on Twitter.

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