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## Foster youth celebrate academic achievement

MADISON – The 11th annual Foster Youth Graduation Celebration was held today at the Executive Residence to honor a special group of Wisconsin students. Governor Tony Evers and First Lady Kathy Evers joined Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson in recognizing foster youth who recently graduated from high school, completed milestones in post-secondary education, or who attained other educational achievements.

“Every year, Kathy and I look forward to this ceremony and the opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of these young people, all they have overcome, and the support systems they have built to get to where they are today,” said Gov. Evers. “They are resilient and dedicated, and I know that these students—with the help of their family, friends, and mentors—will continue to do wonderful things.”

Nationally, approximately 50% of foster youth will graduate from high school and less than 5% graduate from a four-year college and 2 to 6% will complete two-year degree. Most foster youth face stability challenges from losing their biological family, moving, and changes in caseworkers, friends, and schools.

“The youth honored today are truly inspirational. They’ve pursued their educational goals while overcoming some very tough challenges,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “Their strength and determination to move forward academically deserves to be celebrated. I have no doubt that they will continue to do great things in this next chapter.”

The 35 graduates who were able to attend the celebration represented the 93 identified foster youth throughout Wisconsin who are known to have reached commencement in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Former Wisconsin foster youth Chaya Milchtein, founder, and creator of Mechanic Shop Femme, spoke and inspired graduates. Chaya is an automotive educator, influencer, and journalist and holds a degree from the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. She spoke to the graduates about her brave journey towards academic and career success.

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 <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/parent> or the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families website at [www.fosterparentsrock.org](http://www.fosterparentsrock.org).

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