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Foster youth celebrate academic achievement

MADISON – The 12th annual Foster Youth Graduation Celebration was held today at the Executive Residence to honor an inspiring 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.

“Doing what’s best for our kids is what’s best for our state, and I have always believed in the power of public schools and education and how it can change a kid’s life and put them on the path to a better, brighter future,” said Gov. Evers. “Today’s graduates exemplify what it means to work hard and never give up, and we’re incredibly proud of their efforts to get here today. I also want to thank all of the families, mentors, and partners at the Department of Children and Families for their good work and for their role in helping these students reach these milestones.”

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 a two-year degree. Most foster youth face stability challenges from losing their biological family, moving, and changes in caseworkers, friends, and schools.

“For many of these individuals, the journey has not been easy. They’ve faced instability, uncertainty, and sometimes even loss,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “Yet they continued their journey. Their commitment and strength to move forward academically deserves to be celebrated. It is without a doubt that today’s graduates will continue to do great things.”

The 27 graduates who were able to attend the celebration represented the 100 identified foster youth throughout Wisconsin who are known to have reached commencement in the 2023-2024 academic year.

Mr. Larry (Leo) Davis, father, foster youth alum and former Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council Member (YAC), spoke and inspired graduates. Leo is currently pursuing a master's degree and doctorate degree in social work and social entrepreneurship at Loyola University Chicago. He spoke about overcoming systemic inequities and his passion for developing solutions and policy to help others.

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 Wisconsin Family Connections Center website at <https://www.wifamilyconnectionscenter.org/how-do-i/get-started/>.

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