Each year, Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) leaders, members, and allies gather to recognize and celebrate individuals who exemplify excellence, dedication, and commitment to CJJ’s core mission to reform the juvenile justice system and improve the lives of children, families, and communities nationwide. CJJ hopes these outstanding individuals inspire others to serve their communities with the same distinction.
CJJ’s 2016 Spirit of Youth Award is presented to Sang Dao of Oregon for his personal triumphs, professional achievements, and extraordinary service to others.

The Spirit of Youth Award is given annually by CJJ to recognize and celebrate a young adult, under the age of 28, who made great strides after involvement with the juvenile justice system, overcame personal obstacles, and is now making significant contributions to society.

Sang Dao embodies the true essence of a Spirit of Youth awardee. He became involved in the juvenile justice system at the age of 13 after dropping out of school. At the age of 17, he was charged as an adult under Oregon’s “Measure 11” statute, which requires that youth ages 15 - 17 be automatically transferred to the adult criminal justice system for certain offenses. In 2015, Oregon’s outgoing Governor granted him clemency after he served 8 years of a 12 year sentence.

Beginning his sentence with only three high school credits, he committed himself to gaining the skills, knowledge, and education necessary to get his diploma. While incarcerated, he earned an Associate’s Degree and later was awarded a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice and Criminology from Portland State University, magna cum laude. In September 2015, Mr. Dao began his graduate studies to work toward a Master’s Degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice with a focus on juvenile justice policy.

Christina McMahan, Director of Clackamas County Juvenile Department in Oregon and former Director of Multnomah County’s Juvenile Services Division, said, “Sang's determination and personal transformation are truly inspirational. I believe he exemplifies the amazing potential and ability that so many [system-involved youth] have."

Mr. Dao started at Multnomah County Juvenile Services Division in 2015. In his role as a program aide, he has already made several valuable contributions. He worked as part of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) System Assessment team that developed a set of strategic recommendations to drive juvenile justice system change and reform efforts in Multnomah County. He also mentors youth in Measure 11 detention.

Ms. McMahan said, “I am continually inspired by his generosity with others in sharing his personal journey and his genuine commitment to achieving his educational goals, both in the past and currently, so that he can help other young people. [His] personal transformation is evidence that he exhibits the strength, commitment, courage, and ability necessary to continue to make positive contributions in the community and in the juvenile justice field."

The Spirit of Youth award, overseen by the CJJ National Youth Committee, provides an important opportunity to learn from a young person’s direct experience about the hard work and dedication it takes to build a better life, and how those in the juvenile justice system and at the community level can help.
CJJ’s 2016 Tony Gobar Outstanding National Juvenile Justice Specialist Award is presented to Robert D. Vickery of Illinois for his leadership through service and for reminding us all that every child is indeed special.

With this award, CJJ recognizes an individual that has served as a State Juvenile Justice Specialist in the last five years who exemplifies excellence in service to others, is dedicated to improving the juvenile justice system, and demonstrates compassion and concern.

Robert Vickery began his career as a probation officer working with youth in detention in DuPage County, Illinois. He quickly rose to a leadership position and served as a key leader in that community’s Models for Change projects for over five years. He then transitioned to a policy and program leadership position at the Illinois Collaboration on Youth. During this time, he oversaw the design and implementation of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission’s juvenile reentry projects.

Lisa Jacobs, Vice Chair of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, said, “Rob is a quiet leader. He [has put] in countless hours above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that the Commission’s work is effective. He never seeks credit for himself, instead simply doing what needs to be done for a project or initiative to be successful.”

When the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission’s Executive Director position opened up several years ago, staff specifically asked him to apply. In this role, he successfully worked to shape the policy agenda, served as a liaison with local and state leaders, and supported Commission grantees in improving the state’s juvenile justice policy, practice, and programming. Because of his background as a “front line” juvenile justice practitioner -- in the probation and detention fields -- he understands what is at stake and how to improve reform strategies and the outcomes of youth served by the juvenile justice system.

This award is named for Tony Gobar, a longtime Juvenile Justice Specialist from Mississippi. He was honored posthumously by CJJ in 2004 for his exemplary service in the field of juvenile justice reform. He was known for his selflessness, his dedication to his community, and his unceasing compassion for youth.
Mr. Vickery has been vital in the State Advisory Group’s efforts to engage with youth commissioners and young leaders affiliated with their Youth Advisory Board. His colleagues described his dedication and commitment, which is frequently demonstrated in his willingness to schedule meetings whenever is most convenient for youth members. State Advisory Group youth members describe him as caring and reliable. They often speak about his compassion for justice-involved youth and his true concern over the well-being of system-involved youth.

Mr. Vickery recently accepted a new position at the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice. Ms. Jacobs said, “He will be doing valuable work with the Department and the youth and families it serves and he will be fantastic at it. While we’re sorry to lose him as our Juvenile Justice Specialist, we are glad for him and glad that he will continue his stellar work in the juvenile justice world.”
The 2016 A.L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award is presented to Laurie R. Garduque of Illinois for being a champion of youth with courage, compassion, and commitment.

This award is presented annually by CJJ to an individual who makes outstanding contributions to youth, the improvement of juvenile justice, and in the broader area of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention.

Laurie Garduque has served as the Director of Justice Reform at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation since 2002, overseeing the Models for Change initiative. Launched in 2004, Models for Change was a multi-state initiative working to guide and accelerate advances to make juvenile justice systems more fair, effective, rational, and developmentally appropriate.

Capitalizing on a unique historic opportunity to regenerate juvenile justice in America, the initiative promoted a broader movement of reform based in research and evidence of what works to improve outcomes for kids and communities, while holding young people accountable for their behavior. The initiative had an extensive network of committed partners and a long list of success stories, from local practice improvements to major reforms in state policy, funding, and organization.

Ms. Garduque has used her research background to rigorously evaluate how best to use MacArthur resources to advance the cause of juvenile justice reform. Her expansive view of the field informed MacArthur’s approach to systems reform in juvenile justice. During her tenure with the Models for Change initiative, more than $100 million has been invested in support of policy and practice reform activities. The initiative has targeted key states and issues where reforms trigger broader advancements.

David Kindler, a long-time Models for Change communications consultant, said, “Laurie is motivated by a commitment to seeing that every young person [has] the opportunity to grow up with a good education, get a job, and participate in their community. She is a tireless worker and travels...
regularly from coast to coast to meet with grantees, collaborators, professional leaders, and government officials to forge partnerships to advance reform goals.”

Sarah Bryer, Director of the National Juvenile Justice Network, said, “Laurie has been a leader in shifting the landscape for youth justice reform and, as a result, has helped countless youth have the opportunity to achieve a better life. I have known Laurie for a decade, during which time the environment for juvenile justice reform has shifted from largely resistant to open and welcoming. This change in tenor is due in no small part to Laurie’s amazing and tenacious work.”

“Laurie has had an impact on a scale that is beyond the imagination of most of us,” said Robert Schwartz, Co-Founder of the Juvenile Law Center. “I cannot imagine where our field would have gone without her leadership. I cannot imagine where America’s vulnerable youth would be without her advocacy. Laurie is extraordinary and she will be a superb, worthy recipient of the A.L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award.”