Coalition for Juvenile Justice
National Awards

June 19, 2014
Washington, D.C.
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. With the following awards, CJJ also hopes to inspire more people to serve their communities with distinction.
CJJ’s 2014 Spirit of Youth Award is presented to Marquis Parker of the District of Columbia 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.

The award provides CJJ and the public with 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. Each year, CJJ’s National Youth Committee organizes the award.

Marquis Parker embodies the true essence of a Spirit of Youth awardee. Mr. Parker’s prior involvement in the foster care and the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems inform his work, allowing him to give invaluable advice to his peers. His personal experience gives him a keen insight into juvenile justice reform.

Mr. Parker works full-time and still gives back to the community through his work with Mentoring Today’s FREE Project. FREE stands for Fighting for Rights, Education and Employment in the juvenile justice system. He has been a Youth Leader for the FREE Project since his release from the New Beginnings juvenile facility in June 2012.

“He exemplifies what a young person can achieve when given the proper tools and outlet for his abilities,” says Julie Swaney, Director of Youth Advocacy at Mentoring Today. “From the first day I met Marquis, I knew that he had special talents and abilities. He exudes charisma but also an immediate warmth that shows how much empathy he has for those around him.”

As a Youth Leader, he leads discussion groups with other youth residents at New Beginnings to talk about issues the youth are facing both while inside the facility and when they return to the community. He has facilitated discussions on topics including: resolving conflicts within the facility by using mediation; surveying youth on the conditions at New Beginnings; advising youth on how to advocate for themselves with case workers and others; and creating strategies for avoiding rearrest upon release.

Claire N. Blumenson, Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director of the School Justice Project says, “Marquis is not satisfied with just getting a positive result for himself. He takes the time and effort to advocate for others facing similar obstacles and urges everyone involved to drive toward a solution.”
Tony Gobar Outstanding Juvenile Justice Specialist Award

We will be known forever by the tracks we leave.
-- Dakota Proverb

CJJ’s 2014 Tony Gobar Outstanding National Juvenile Justice Specialist Award is presented to Reg Garff of Utah, for his leadership through service and for reminding us all that every child is indeed special.

With this award, CJJ recognizes a State Juvenile Justice Specialist who exemplifies excellence in service to others, is dedicated to improving the juvenile justice system and demonstrates compassion and concern.

Reg Garff has served as Utah’s Juvenile Justice Specialist since 2002. In this role, he has diligently supervised, monitored, and thoroughly evaluated more than 35 juvenile justice projects across Utah. He manages the Utah Board of Juvenile Justice and the Disproportionate Minority Subcommittee, as well as the budgets of four federal and state programs. He supports the Utah State Advisory Group in their plan to address delinquency prevention in K-8 students, crisis intervention, female offender services, mentoring and others.

Alan Miller, Idaho’s Juvenile Justice Specialist says, “Reg is very unassuming and humble but always speaks up and adds wisdom to any conversation. He avoids pre-judgment and considers issues from a reasonable and informed position. He shows great leadership on a national level as a staunch advocate for [his State Advisory Group], a leader and mentor for new JJ Specialists, and a diplomat with OJJDP. He embodies the concept of restorative justice by seeking to resolve differences, build relationships, and develop strong community connections.”

Mr. Garff is known for his endless dedication to equity and fairness. He has been a leader on numerous CJJ projects and committees and has demonstrated his commitment to creating an effective juvenile justice system with his steadfast presence at CJJ events.

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.
He has been active in national discussions on important issues involving status offenses, the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and mental health. His colleagues speak of his dedication to State Advisory Group members, especially his championing of youth members.

“Reg’s gifts to the national conversation clearly emanate from a vision focused on youth and families,” adds Alan Miller. “He processes every issue through a lens that is keenly focused on cooperative problem-solving for the benefit of youth.”

Mr. Garff has worked in juvenile and criminal justice for almost 25 years, beginning his career in Pre-Trial Services in Salt Lake County. For five years, he coordinated a mentoring program for the Third District Juvenile Court, where he increased volunteer enrollment by 30 percent to assist young people in need of help. Mr. Garff also served as the Grants Monitor for the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, and as a Training Manager for the Murdock Group.

He has a Master’s Degree in Public Administration and Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.
Nothing you do for children is ever wasted.
- Garrison Keillor

CJJ’s 2014 A.L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award is presented to David Schmidt of New Mexico for championing for youth with courage, compassion and commitment.

CJJ’s A.L. Carlisle Child Advocacy 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.

Over the course of the last forty years, David Schmidt has been a dedicated, committed, passionate and effective child advocate. As Director of the New Mexico Council on Crime and Delinquency, he has helped shape the juvenile justice environment in New Mexico and nationally with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention for effective results with youth.

Mr. Schmidt began his career as a social worker and probation officer; he uses his perspective as both a practitioner and a policy advocate to further juvenile justice reform. He has been instrumental in crafting and helping state and federal legislative bodies pass innovative, progressive and positive laws to improve the conditions affecting vulnerable children and their families.

Susan Kamp, Immediate Past Chair of CJJ’s Executive Board and Vermont State Advisory Group member says, “Dave’s empathy is so obviously a strength, as he understands and appreciates the nuances of family and child vulnerability. His perspectives, while at times more global, always take into account the impact of what happens ‘on the ground’ to each child or family member.”

Mr. Schmidt has worked tirelessly with the New Mexico legislature, congressional delegation, executive agencies, and others to achieve the goal of establishing the appropriate programs and funding for youth.

This award is named in honor of A.L. Carlisle, CJJ’s founding force. “She was a volunteer activist who strived to ensure that the nation’s most troubled and vulnerable children would have secure futures. She served as the first CJJ National Chair and Northeast Regional Chair from 1979 through 1987. The saying goes that, in its formative years, “the national coalition was run out of A.L.’s kitchen in Maine!”
He advocates for those that are voiceless, have developmental disabilities, mental health limitations and substance abuse issues.

He was first appointed to his State Advisory Group following passage of the JJDPA in 1974. He was the original Chair of OJJDP’s Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice. He has been a long time member of the National Juvenile Justice Network and currently serves on their Executive Committee. He has served as the National Chair of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and is currently a CJJ Executive Board member.

No better example of his pioneering work can be found than this: New Mexico’s initial children’s policies were established through his development of the New Mexico Children’s Code in 1971, which mandated separate treatment for delinquents, status offenders, and abused children. He is considered the “Father of the New Mexico Children’s Code,” as he spent countless hours drafting and advocating for the passage of the Code and subsequent revisions in the following decades. Innovative changes included the prohibition of institutionalization of status offenders, prohibiting the death penalty for under 18 year olds, and the development of many resources.

“Dave’s interests in others and his concerns for the future of the field blend together creating genuine warmth and interest in colleagues,” says Susan Kamp. “He is always willing to share his expertise and he honors every commitment that he makes. Always there with words of encouragement, support, advice and counsel, he walks with others as they work in their states as well as nationally. His compassion for others and passion for juvenile justice fuel him to help us all be better advocates.”