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DCFS Honors College-Bound Youth

Inaugural Pamela Knight Award given to a youth in memory of social worker who lost her life early this year

CHICAGO – Department of Children and Family Services Director BJ Walker presented scholarships to 54 college-bound current and former youth in care. Each recipient will receive a monthly grant and up to five consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers that can be used at participating Illinois state community colleges and universities.

“I am extremely proud of all of our scholarship recipients,” said DCFS Acting Director BJ Walker. “These students have demonstrated resilience and are changing the trajectory of their future. I applaud them on their success.”

Governor Bruce Rauner also offered words of encouragement in a letter to the scholarship recipients, urging them to press toward their dreams.

“Education is a critical component to all we do in life. It is the key to success,” said Gov. Rauner. “These scholarships will open the doors to a lifetime of possibilities for each of these young men and women. I encourage them to learn all they can and stay focused as they work to achieve their dreams.”

More than 1,300 youth in care have had an opportunity to pursue a college degree since the DCFS scholarship program began in 1971. A new award was added this year, in honor of Pamela Knight, who dedicated more than 30 years of her life to protecting children. She died on February 8, 2018 after succumbing to injuries sustained in the line of duty.

The Pamela Knight award was presented to a youth who is pursuing a degree in social work.

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The scholarship winners were selected from nearly 250 applicants from across the state based on academic achievement, community involvement and an essay.

About the DCFS Scholarship

The DCFS Scholarship Program provides a minimum of 53 scholarships each year, four of which are awarded to children of veterans. Youth who the department has court-ordered legal responsibility for, youth who aged out of the department's care at age 18 or older, youth that the department had legal responsibility for prior to the youth's adoption being finalized, or youth that are in the Subsidized Guardianship or KinGap Program are eligible to apply for a DCFS Scholarship. Scholarship recipients receive up to five consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state community colleges and universities, a monthly grant and a medical card. Youth that graduated from high school in previous years or youth who are currently enrolled in college are eligible to apply for a department scholarship, as long as they will be under the age of 21 on the scholarship application deadline of March 31 each year.

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