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## **Pa Family Support Alliance Honors Four Pennsylvania Residents as Champions for Safe Kids**

*Residents across the state are honored for their work to #ProtectPAKids from abuse*

**HARRISBURG, Pa. (April 2, 2024)** – “Lean on Me” resonated loudly throughout the State Capitol today as Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Secretary Valerie Arkoosh, Deputy Secretary Laval Miller-Wilson, child advocates, business leaders, students, and Pa Family Support Alliance (PFSA) lifted up their collective voices together and honored four Pennsylvanians that have gone above and beyond the call of duty to protect children.

“April allows us to call the public’s attention to the overwhelming cases of child abuse and neglect — it is a systemic issue plaguing our society,” said Angela Liddle, President, and CEO of [PFSA](#). “While these issues can be difficult for many to talk about, it will take each and every one of us to combat them. Our four Blue Ribbon Champions demonstrate that one individual can truly make a difference in the life of a child. We are incredibly grateful to have such strong leadership in the Commonwealth, as Secretary Arkoosh continues to be boldly committed to prevention measures.”

**Photos and short b-roll clips can be found [here](#).**

“Protecting children starts with supporting families – this work cannot exist in a vacuum. Too often situations of potential abuse and neglect start with families having difficulty meeting essential needs. I firmly believe that no family needs to go through life alone, and that extra hand and sense of community can be something that gives parents the hope and support they deserve – support that can be transformative and result in better circumstances for their entire family,” said Secretary Arkoosh. “As we recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month and celebrate our 2024 Blue Ribbon Champions, let’s use this as an opportunity to remember that it takes all of us working together to support families, to protect children, and build a Commonwealth and communities that do more for people at risk or struggling. Our children deserve no less from us.”

Known as the Blue Ribbon Champions for Safe Kids, the four honorees received an award and were recognized for their steadfast commitment to protecting Pennsylvania’s children. An independent panel of judges selected the winners from nominations submitted from across the state. As the state’s leader in child abuse prevention, PFSA has been giving out this award for six years. The winners include educators and advocates.

The 2024 award recipients are:

- Kimberly Saltsman, Executive Director, Children’s Advocacy Center of Centre County, Mount Nittany Health (Clearfield County resident)
- Nancy Reitzel, Early Childhood Education Instructor, Cumberland Perry Area Career & Technical Center (Cumberland County resident)
- Crystal Long, Forensic Interviewer/Prevention Educator, Adams County Children’s Advocacy Center (Franklin County resident)
- Lisa K. Wilcox, Director of Children and Youth, Sullivan County Children and Youth Services (Sullivan County resident)

The Capitol as well as the Walnut Street and Market Street bridges in downtown Harrisburg will be lit up blue — the official color of National Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month — April 2-4 at PFSA’s request.

At today’s ceremony, PFSA was joined by the Susquehanna Children’s Chorale, the Pennsylvania Dairywomen’s Association, and various state and local elected officials.

Inclement weather forced the cancellation of PFSA’s annual blue-ribbon flag planting event along State Street outside the Capitol in Harrisburg. The flags, planted April 1 to coordinate with the ceremony, symbolize the number of substantiated child abuse cases that occurred in Pennsylvania in 2022. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services’ Child Protective Services 2022 Annual Report, there were 4,992 substantiated cases of child abuse, 60 substantiated fatalities, and 138 substantiated near fatalities.

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### **About Pa Family Support Alliance**

[Pa Family Support Alliance](#) prevents child abuse and protects children from harm by helping parents learn positive parenting techniques, educating professionals and volunteers who work with children to recognize and report child abuse, and helping community members learn how they can play a positive role in keeping children safe. To learn more about our programs, schedule a training, or make a donation, please visit [pafsa.org](http://pafsa.org), or call 800-448-4906.

