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Helping Abused and Neglected Children Leads to Award for Children’s Services Worker

Cincinnati (Nov. 30, 2006) A Hamilton County Children’s Services worker who supervises a unit handling severe physical abuse and neglect cases has won an award honoring those who help victims of violent crime.

Lori Watkins, a licensed social worker for 20 years, will receive a Hope in Heels award during a Dec. 1 luncheon. The Hope in Heels Foundation, started in 2005, recognizes those who use outstanding sensitivity, determination, collaboration and skill in their work with crime victims.

Watkins supervises the Department of Job and Family Services’ Medical Investigations Unit, which is housed at the Mayerson Center for Safe and Healthy Children at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. The unit handles severe medical and physical abuse cases, including Shaken Baby Syndrome, fatalities, serious physical injuries, chronic medical neglect and failure to thrive.

“I was very surprised and am honored to be selected,” Watkins said. “It is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the positive work we do here in our community.”

The award’s nomination describes Watkins as a “hard-working, dedicated and knowledgeable professional. She works very hard to make sure children are safe.”

Watkins, who lives in the Eastgate area with her four children, is a 1984 graduate of Miami University.

The Mayerson Center, which opened in January, 2000, brings together many resources dedicated to preventing and treating child abuse. Besides the child abuse investigators, the staff includes law enforcement officers, a victim’s advocate from the prosecutor’s office, and Children’s Hospital physicians, nurses and social workers. About six or seven suspected child abuse cases are investigated at the Mayerson Center every day.

Last year’s Hope in Heels winner was Sue Moore, a county JFS Children’s Services worker who oversees a sex abuse unit at the Mayerson Center.

“I think the fact that Sue won last year and Lori this year speaks to the difficulty and intensity of the cases we get here in the Mayerson Center,” said Heidi Malott, a Children’s Hospital clinical manager at the Mayerson Center.

About Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services

The Department of Job and Family Services administers federal, state and local programs for those in need. The Department helps with local child protection, adult protection, child care, tuberculosis control, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food stamp disbursement and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands of residents each year. The Department of Job and Family Services is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.