



**NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Melinda Lis, Vice President of The Academy for Family Support and Preservation at Spaulding,  
Honored with 2020 National Adoption Excellence Award from The Children’s Bureau**

SOUTHFIELD, Mich., Nov. 19, 2020 – The Children’s Bureau at HHS Administration for Children and Families has awarded its 2020 National Adoption Excellence Award to Melinda Lis, Spaulding for Children Vice President of The Academy for Family Support and Preservation. Ms. Lis received the honor Tuesday, Nov. 17 at the 2020 National Adoption Month Celebration.

The 2020 Adoption Excellence Award was made in recognition of Ms. Lis’ professional work to increase the number of children from foster care who are adopted or placed in other permanent homes.

Part of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children & Families (ACF), the Children’s Bureau (CB) works with federal, state, tribal and local agencies to improve the overall health and well-being of our nation’s children and families.

“Melinda Lis has motivated and inspired the child welfare community and people around her to accomplish more than they would have normally,” Cristina Peixoto, President/CEO of Spaulding for Children, said. “With the right mix of positivity, the amazing ability to tap into other’s strengths and thinking outside of the box, Melinda has successfully contributed to inform and transform the views and understanding about the role played by child welfare systems and communities in supporting post permanency family.”

The adoption excellence awards given each year by the Children's Bureau to recognize individuals and families who, and organizations that, have demonstrated excellence in making contributions to providing permanency for children in foster care. Professional peers nominate individuals and organizations. Families also can make nominations.

“This is a great honor for me, but also is a great honor for our staff,” Ms. Lis said. “We have dedicated our lives to working in child welfare. Today there are approximately 122,000 children awaiting adoption – about 3,000 of whom are in Michigan. So, we have more work to do and many more people to help.”

Melinda Lis started her career with Spaulding in July 2013 as the Vice President of the Spaulding Academy for Family Support and Preservation, where she continues to play leadership roles on three federal projects through the Children’s Bureau.

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Normally held before an in-person audience in Washington, D.C., this year's National Adoption Month Celebration was webcast live on Tuesday, Nov. 17. This year's National Adoption Month theme, "Engage Youth: Listen and Learn," highlights the importance of listening to young people and learning from them ways to support their path to permanency.

The ceremony featured HHS Secretary Alex M. Azar II, Lynn Johnson, Assistant Secretary for ACF, Elizabeth Darling, Commissioner, ACF/Children's Bureau, Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau at ACF and June Dorn, National Adoption Specialist, ACF/Children's Bureau.

The awardees include families who have adopted children from foster care; child welfare professionals working to improve permanency outcomes for children; and individuals and organizations who use their resources and connections to strengthen outcomes for children and youth adopted from foster care.

Members of the Spaulding for Children team have been recognized by The Children's Bureau at Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families a number of times. Recipients include:

- Addie Williams, then President/CEO of Spaulding, was recognized in 2016 for professional leadership and pioneering work with special needs adoption.
- Natalie Lyons and the National Resource Center for Adoption were recognized in 2012 for professional leadership and honored with the Centennial Adoption Excellence Awards.
- Paul VanderVelde, who served as a member of Spaulding's National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption, was honored in 2006 for devoting his professional life to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families, in particular abuse and neglected children in the foster care system.
- Drenda Lakin, then Vice President at Spaulding for Children, was honored in 2004 for her leadership in special needs adoption and contributions to the profession of child welfare.

### **About Spaulding for Children**

Spaulding for Children is a national leader in developing and providing resources and training for foster and adoptive families and those who serve and support them. Started in 1968 with the belief that every child is adoptable, Spaulding brought attention to foster children with special needs. Today Spaulding provides research-based training and education for those interested in becoming adoptive and foster parents in addition to service contracts and partnership projects funded through the Michigan DHHS and the Children's Bureau and parenting and preventive support program for young women who are pregnant or young mothers between the ages of 13-24 children with risk factors for child abuse and neglect. Spaulding for Children prevention program includes assistance, coaching and mentoring for the most vulnerable parents and have achieved a significant success rate in keeping families intact.

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