



18th Annual  
2025

# Ungung Hero AWARDS

Recognizing extraordinary parents and caregivers that strengthen families, reduce stress, and promote overall well-being to create nurturing environments for children.

**Governor's Executive Chamber  
New Hampshire State House  
107 N Main St. Concord, NH 03301**



## Britta

Britta exemplifies resilience, strength, and dedication as a single parent and Early Childhood Infant Room Teacher at the YMCA. She is a devoted mother to her daughter, Josie, who faces multiple complex medical challenges. Despite this, Britta tirelessly advocates for Josie's medical care, coordinating treatments in Boston and New Hampshire to ensure her daughter receives the best support possible.

Britta's extensive knowledge of child development and her ability to navigate support systems have benefitted not only her daughter but also the families she serves in her classroom. She uses her experience and access to community resources to enhance the lives of her students and their families, providing compassionate care and practical support. Her positivity, empathy, and generosity inspire those around her, both personally and professionally.

Balancing her daughter's medical needs with her role as an early childhood educator, Britta shows remarkable strength, resilience, and unwavering determination. Her ability to navigate these challenges with such perseverance highlights her deep commitment and resilience. She has become a role model for parents and educators alike, proving that love and hard work can overcome even the toughest circumstances.

Britta's impact extends beyond her family, as she contributes to the childcare community with her commitment and expertise. Her sacrifices and love for Josie, combined with her contributions as an Infant Room Teacher, make her truly deserving of recognition. The Unsung Hero Award honors Britta's selfless efforts and highlights her as an exceptional parent and educator whose determination and compassion leave a lasting impression on everyone she meets.

## Baylie (Bo)

Bo, a participant in Healthy Families America, discovered her pregnancy at sixteen, an unplanned and life-changing event that filled her with fear and uncertainty. She worried about her father's reaction and societal stigma surrounding teen pregnancy. At the time, Bo was a high school student navigating typical teenage milestones like studying for her driver's license.

Ellionna, Bo's daughter, was born prematurely at 36 weeks and spent two weeks in the Intensive Care Unit before going home. Bo relied on her family's support during this challenging period and has since become a devoted mother. She actively tracks Ellionna's developmental milestones, even requesting the 15-month ASQ from her doctor to ensure her daughter's growth is on track. Bo's passion for research and reading fuels her dedication to being an exceptional mother, mentor, and teacher to her child.

Bo shares a strong, loving bond with Ellionna, evident in the way she nurtures her daughter and celebrates her progress. She describes Ellionna as sassy, beautiful, and brave, expressing hopes for her happiness and success. Bo is committed to raising her with effective communication skills and providing a supportive, nurturing environment where she can thrive.

Bo's determination extends beyond motherhood. She completed the Jobs for America's Graduates program, began working as a Licensed Nursing Assistant at a local hospital, and is pursuing her GED while preparing for her driver's license. Within 15 days of starting her job, she secured financial protections, including a 403B plan, life insurance, disability insurance, and a high-yield savings account, ensuring her daughter's future is safeguarded.

Through her resilience, love, and family support, Bo has transformed her challenges into motivation for a bright future for both herself and her daughter. Her inspiring journey reflects her unwavering commitment to growth and success.

## Cindy

Cindy's resilience and dedication to her three adopted teenage daughters are remarkable. Since May 2024, she has demonstrated exceptional strength, stepping up to parent not only her two granddaughters but also one of their friends, all of whom she has legally adopted. She treats them as if they had always been with her, offering love and support in every way possible. No matter the challenge, Cindy goes to great lengths to meet their needs, ensuring their well-being and doing whatever it takes to support them.

Cindy is not only intelligent and level-headed, but she also understands the importance of asking for help when needed. She is proactive in reaching out for resources and follows through with every suggestion or piece of advice offered to her. She consistently manages her daughters' medical care with great attention and dedication.

Despite the challenges, Cindy recognizes the importance of maintaining family connections, making sure her daughters stay close to their extended family. Her daughters, who have faced numerous hardships, know they can always count on Cindy for support. She provides empathy and understanding but also ensures they are held accountable for their actions.

Cindy's knowledge of parenting teenagers is impressive, and each time others meet with her, they learn something valuable. Her ability to balance empathy with discipline, her unwavering support for her daughters, and her commitment to their future make Cindy an outstanding candidate for the Unsung Hero Award and she truly deserves recognition for her selfless dedication.

## Crystal

Before joining the TLC Family Resource Center's Comprehensive Family Support Services-Home Visiting program, Crystal was in the early stages of recovery from opioid use disorder. After a relapse following 14 years of voluntary abstinence, she discovered she was pregnant, was currently without stable housing, and was striving to rebuild her life. Throughout the years, Crystal faced numerous struggles related to substance misuse, including homelessness, separation from her children, disconnection from family and friends, financial instability, encounters with the criminal justice system and DCYF, job losses, and deep feelings of despair.

In 2023, after an arrest, Crystal recognized the challenges ahead, thoughtfully considered adoption as a path to ensure the best future for her child while navigating her journey to overcome opioid use disorder. However, a crucial turning point came when a police officer recognized her long-standing struggles and helped her see that recovery was possible. This realization sparked a shift from hopelessness to hope. Crystal began to prioritize her health, resumed medical treatment for her opioid use disorder, and prepared for the arrival of her child.

On July 4, 2023, Crystal welcomed her healthy daughter, Arayah-Sunshyne, into the world. With the right support in place, she felt ready to bring Arayah-Sunshyne home from the hospital. Crystal attributes her recovery journey to her daughter and is committed to providing her with a better life. She vows to protect her daughter from the poverty that defined her own childhood.

Now nearly two years sober, Crystal is working toward reinstating her nursing license and securing affordable housing. Despite being currently unhoused, she remains optimistic about the future. She has distanced herself from the criminal justice system, rebuilt relationships with her daughters, and is dedicated to ensuring a better life for her children. Crystal's resilience and commitment to motherhood make her a remarkable example of strength and transformation.

## Desaraye

Desaraye is a dedicated and resilient single parent who has stepped up to care for her three active boys, ranging from elementary school age to teenage years, while her husband has been away. Despite the challenges that come with raising a blended family, Desaraye has worked tirelessly to ensure her children's needs are met. She has educated herself on child development to better understand and support each child in their unique stage of growth.

In addition to her full-time job, Desaraye has taken on the responsibilities of managing her children's extracurricular activities, including transporting them to practices, games, and events. She has always made family time a priority, organizing outings and trips to create lasting memories. Throughout all of this, Desaraye has continuously put her children's emotional needs above her own, always offering love and validation, often going out of her way to get on their level and express her care.

Despite the stress and challenges that have come her way, Desaraye has always managed to bounce back and has remained the loving, nurturing parent her children need. She constantly reflects on how she can do better, always asking, "What else can I do?" Her ability to navigate the stresses of parenthood with resilience, love, and humility makes Desaraye a true unsung hero. Her dedication to her family and self-improvement is truly inspiring.

## Jennifer

Jenn is being celebrated for her unwavering strength, resilience, and dedication in overcoming immense challenges, including navigating the complexities of the state systems and gaining custody of her granddaughter, whom she has recently adopted. Her steadfast determination through these trials makes her truly deserving of the Unsung Hero Award.

Jenn manages a busy life, balancing raising her granddaughter, caring for her own children, and owning a cleaning business. Despite her responsibilities, she actively participates in the Kinship Navigation Program, attends support groups, and advocates for herself, her family, and others in similar situations. She is always ready to lend a helping hand, and most recently, she contributed to creating a video for the New Hampshire Children's Trust, sharing information about support group opportunities with the community.

Jenn is an advocate not only for others but also for her family. She maintains strong connections with community resources and knows when to seek assistance. Jenn is deeply involved in her granddaughter's development, regularly communicating with teachers and other caregivers to ensure her educational and emotional needs are met. Her commitment to her granddaughter's growth and well-being, along with her advocacy for others, makes Jenn a true role model. For her unwavering perseverance, dedication to her family, and advocacy in the community, Jenn truly deserves recognition as an Unsung Hero.

# Karen

Karen and her partner, Caroline, have shown remarkable dedication since taking guardianship of Karen's teen niece and nephew. Upon arrival, the children faced challenges, including experiences with neglect and interrupted schooling. Karen swiftly enrolled them in school and created a safe environment for them to process their trauma. She has been a strong advocate for their needs, ensuring they receive medical and emotional support by arranging access to doctors, counselors, and social security cards, and has helped her niece get involved with the UpReach Therapeutic Equestrian Center.

Karen is proactive in preparing them for their future, including assisting her nephew with his driver's education through the NH Driver Education Scholarship and helping both children secure jobs. Despite the unexpected nature of this placement, Karen and Caroline have done everything necessary to ensure the children's well-being.

Karen remains calm, level-headed, and open to guidance, seeking help from those around her to strengthen her family. She understands the importance of providing a well-balanced lifestyle, fostering both the emotional and developmental growth of her niece and nephew, while respecting their need for autonomy. Her unwavering dedication to her family's success is evident in her actions, making her a true advocate for the children's futures.

# Kayla

Kayla began her transformative journey in the Healthy Families America Program in December 2021, driven by a deep desire to create a stable and nurturing environment for her daughter, Maggie. Facing challenges such as substance misuse, food insecurity, and unstable housing before her pregnancy, Kayla was determined to break the cycle of conflict and instability she experienced in her childhood. Upon learning of her pregnancy, she recognized the immediate need for change, with the goal of creating a peaceful home and providing a sober, stable environment for her child.

Through the program, Kayla accessed crucial support services, including recovery assistance, parenting education, and help securing affordable housing. With the guidance of her Recovery Coach and Family Support Specialist, she embraced sobriety and prioritized her well-being throughout her pregnancy. Kayla's resourcefulness in utilizing available resources has been a key factor in her success.

Today, Kayla is a thriving mother, securing permanent housing and healthcare for both herself and Maggie. She earned her Early Childhood Certificate in May and now works full time at a childcare center. Kayla's commitment to education continues, as she plans to pursue a four-year degree in Early Childhood Development.

In addition to her career, Kayla has a passion for crafting, selling her handmade creations online and at local craft fairs. Her strong bond with Maggie reflects her deep commitment to being a nurturing and caring mother. Kayla's perseverance, resilience, and determination to overcome challenges inspire others and highlight the impact of the right support system on achieving personal and family goals.



# Magdelene (Maggie)

Maggie is an extraordinary individual who embodies the true spirit of resilience, selflessness, and dedication. A mother of four, she navigates significant personal and professional challenges with unwavering determination, including completing her doctorate in education, teaching special education, and ensuring the well-being of her children. Despite facing racial discrimination, bias, and personal sacrifices, including being separated from her husband while pursuing her studies in the U.S., Maggie has thrived, demonstrating remarkable strength in the face of adversity.

Her ability to support her children emotionally and socially, especially in difficult situations such as bullying and health challenges, showcases her deep commitment as a mother. She also advocates for her children's education and well-being, ensuring they feel supported in school and at home. During the pandemic, Maggie took on the responsibility of homeschooling her children, ensuring they stayed on track academically.

Maggie's resilience extends beyond her family. She has built a strong support network of friends, family, and community members, readily accepting help when needed. This network has allowed her to continue pushing forward while maintaining a nurturing environment for her children. Maggie's empathy, positivity, and thoughtfulness also extend to her friends, as she checks in on them and offers comfort during tough times.

Maggie's unwavering dedication to her family, her selflessness, and her ability to juggle personal, professional, and family responsibilities while navigating hardships make her a true unsung hero. She is a role model for resilience and strength, deserving of recognition for her quiet, impactful acts of service that shape the lives of everyone around her.

# Melissa

Melissa is a single mother of three who exemplifies the qualities of an "Unsung Hero." Resilient, resourceful, and empathetic, Melissa navigates the challenges of motherhood with strength and determination. She maintains a strong support system, demonstrating a willingness to ask for help when needed.

Earlier this year, after a fire displaced her family from their apartment, Melissa demonstrated remarkable resilience and quickly took action under pressure. Having participated in the Parenting Plus Program, she acted swiftly, grabbing a binder with important family documents as she fled the burning building. This quick thinking proved crucial in securing emergency funding from the American Red Cross and additional assistance from DHHS, which allowed the family to stay in a hotel for nearly two months.

Melissa leveraged community resources, including Gateways Community Services and the Front Door Agency, to find a new apartment. Within two months, she had secured housing, a remarkable achievement given the shortage of affordable housing in southern NH. She also accessed Trestle Funds through Waypoint to purchase beds and mattresses for her family.

Throughout this difficult experience, Melissa's primary concern remained her children's emotional and social well-being. She ensured they had access to therapeutic supports and worked closely with their schools to advocate for their needs during this time of upheaval.

Melissa's resilience, resourcefulness, and unwavering commitment to her children make her a true unsung hero, serving as an inspiration and role model to all.

# Sandra

Sandy demonstrates extraordinary resilience, navigating life's challenges with remarkable calm and focus. Her ability to handle stress effectively, even in difficult circumstances, is truly inspiring.

Her strong support system, built through years of participation in the Kinship Navigation Program and community outreach, is a testament to her ability to foster connections. She consistently opens her heart and home to others, creating a network of support that others rely on.

Having raised a diverse group of children, both her own and others', with varying needs, Sandy has cultivated a wealth of knowledge and expertise in parenting and child development. She knows exactly where to find resources, what steps to take, and is always willing to share her vast knowledge with others in need.

Her compassion extends beyond her family to anyone in need, as she is known for her empathy, care, and support. Often called the "Mom of the group," Sandy's kindness and willingness to help others in her community are unparalleled. She is always ready to provide both practical and emotional support, making her a cherished figure in her network.

Sandy also isn't afraid to ask for help when needed. She actively participates in community endeavors like food pantries and church drives, showing a deep commitment to giving back. Sandy has raised not only her children but also her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She has successfully navigated numerous legal challenges, overcoming obstacles and adversities with unwavering determination and resilience. Sandy's life is a testament to the power of resilience, care, and unwavering dedication to family and community, making her an ideal candidate for this award.



*Congratulations Awardees!*

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**105B Loudon Road, Suite 201  
Concord, NH 03301  
[www.nhchildrenstrust.org](http://www.nhchildrenstrust.org)**