



**19th Annual
Unsung
Hero
Awards**

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

2026

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

Angela

Angela is a stay-at-home mom who shows remarkable dedication to her daughter with complex medical needs. She demonstrates calm and patience, collaborating with a team of doctors, therapists, and other specialty providers, while managing her daughter's care with steady determination. Regardless of the challenge, Angela continues to show incredible resilience—always adapting, learning, and finding ways to support her daughter while also showing up for other families.

Angela is deeply connected to the Monadnock Family Council through Monadnock Developmental Services, where she serves as the legislative liaison. She also manages the council's Facebook page, using her voice to share resources, uplift families, and strengthen community connections. She uses her experience to seek out grants and funding opportunities in support of the program.

Angela shows a unique gift for bringing people together, demonstrated through her participation in the River Center's 'See the ABLE, Not the LABEL' support group for parents of children with disabilities. In one of many examples, Angela worked with another parent to establish virtual engagement opportunities between their children, speaking to her commitment to building meaningful social connections not just for her daughter, but for everyone. Angela's participation in the 2026 New Hampshire Leadership Series has furthered her advocacy and leadership skills, which she continues to use to promote change for people with disabilities.

Angela meets her daughter's educational and emotional needs with compassion and creativity, adopting a kitten for her daughter and providing her with opportunities to connect in a way that she is comfortable with. Social connection is a strong focus for Angela, and she excels at finding and creating opportunities for her daughter to build connections within her community. Angela demonstrates a strong commitment to her family and broader Monadnock region through her advocacy, resilience, and determination to promote positive outcomes for her child and others. These traits, and countless others, exemplify why Angela is an Unsung Hero. Congratulations, Angela!

Brittney

Brittney is a remarkable woman whose strength, compassion, and resilience make her an Unsung Hero. Navigating unimaginable hardship after experiencing the loss of a child, Brittney worked hard to care for her three children, while also continuing her work at Dublin Community Preschool and Childcare with unwavering dedication. Managing her household during her spouse's deployment, Brittney met the needs of her three young children, providing a safe, nurturing, and stable environment for both her family and the children in her care. Her ability to balance her personal hardships with the demands of her professional role is nothing short of extraordinary.

Brittney exemplifies parental resilience every day—managing stress with grace, adapting to overwhelming circumstances, and always finding a way to keep moving forward. Her social connections are strong because she supports those around her just as much as she leans on them. Brittney's interactions with children highlight her understanding of parenting and child development, and she acts as a strong advocate for all children's emotional, social, and developmental needs, both her own, and those in her community.

As a parent and professional, Brittney models social and emotional competence, showing empathy, validating feelings, and helping children understand and navigate theirs. She shows the ability to seek concrete supports when needed, modeling that asking for help is a strength. This vulnerability, combined with her strength, makes her an inspiring example for both parents and educators.

Throughout hardship, Brittney continues to engage with kindness, love, and positive leadership for her family, work, and community. She embodies resilience, compassion, and courage in the face of extraordinary challenges. Brittney's ability to overcome challenges exemplifies why she is an Unsung Hero. Congratulations, Brittney!

Charlene & Ed

After five years of marriage, Charlene and Ed began parenting Charlene's 16-year-old nephew, immediately prioritizing his wellbeing. While experiencing some of their own health challenges, the couple quickly and attentively began to learn about their nephew's experiences and needs in order to best support him.

Understanding the importance of having a support system, Charlene and Ed became involved in the state's Kinship Navigation Program through Waypoint, finding a network of peers experiencing similar family circumstances. In addition to this, Charlene and Ed strengthened their support network by joining the caregiver support group offered through the program. Leaning on this network, Charlene and Ed increased their knowledge of how to support their nephew while also reflecting on themselves as individuals and caregivers.

Parenting a second time around, Charlene and Ed drew from their past experiences to inform their approach to parenting their nephew. Both caregivers expanded on their existing knowledge of child development by seeking information about healing from trauma. Charlene and Ed extended their support outside of their home by supporting their nephew with his education, connecting him to extracurriculars, and learning the life skills that would help him succeed in his relationships, employment, and long-term goals. Throughout this time, Charlene and Ed continued to respect their nephew's development and independence as a young adult.

For the past two years, Charlene and Ed have demonstrated resilience as individuals, a couple, and as caregivers to their nephew. Their ability to find and connect with resources for their family is inspiring, and contributes to their being *Unsung Heroes*. Congratulations, Charlene and Ed!

Heidi

Heidi is an exceptional leader, parent, and individual, whose ability to demonstrate resilience in the face of challenges is truly inspiring. As a mother of two children with significant needs and a working professional at PathWays, Heidi navigates complex situations with poise and composure, always prioritizing the well-being of those around her. Her two sons with disabilities have taught her the importance of patience, understanding, and advocacy. As a member of the Special Needs Support Council, Heidi seeks to use her experience and passion to help support others.

Heidi expertly balances her professional and personal life, ensuring her children receive the care and support they need. She understands the importance of social connections and has built a strong network of family, friends, and colleagues who support her and her family. Heidi acts as a role model for those around her, demonstrating an ability to ask for help when needed and always being willing to help others.

With a clear understanding of child development, Heidi demonstrates willingness to adapt to her children's unique needs, which has been instrumental to their growth and wellbeing. Heidi creates a safe and nurturing environment where her children can express themselves freely.

Acting as a fierce advocate for her children, Heidi navigates a complex system to ensure that her children have what they need, finding play groups, activities, and toys that suit their developmental and sensory needs. Understanding the importance of building a support system for her family, Heidi found a community for herself and her husband, along with her children, ensuring that they have a peer group. Approaching parenthood with compassion, dedication, and unwavering commitment, Heidi uses her lived experiences and education to support not only her family, but countless others. Because of this, it is clear that Heidi is an *Unsung Hero*. Congratulations, Heidi!

Jacqueline

Jackie, a mom of three, demonstrates remarkable tenacity and resilience in the face of hardship. Experiencing homelessness for two years, Jackie utilized her support network and community resources to navigate this experience and continue to meet her children's needs. Jackie has unbounding energy, meets challenges head on, and perseveres through setbacks, building a strong support network with Waypoint, Merrimack ACERT, and her co-workers.

Jackie has built a supportive community, celebrated each success, big and small, and sought help when needed, using Trestle Funds to fund a vehicle repair, which enabled her to have reliable transportation. Prioritizing the needs of her children, Jackie worked with the Nashua Boys and Girls Club and Merrimack YMCA for afterschool and summer care, providing her children with positive memories and consistent support while she worked.

Utilizing support from the Town of Merrimack and New Hampshire Housing, Jackie and her children obtained housing and moved into their own apartment in 2025. This milestone speaks to Jackie's commitment to herself, her children, and her family's future. Throughout this process, Jackie demonstrated patience and dedication, navigating complex documentation requirements and establishing practices to keep her records organized.

Jackie's ability to build connections and utilize her support system are clear strengths, allowing her to obtain secure childcare and housing for her children and providing them with opportunities to thrive, even when circumstances were challenging. Having worked hard to build a network and establish a safe home, Jackie's long-term goals now include pursuing a social work degree! Jackie's resilience in the face of hardship clearly demonstrates that she is an Unsung Hero. Congratulations, Jackie!

Kayla

Kayla embodies resilience and determination as a single parent and fierce advocate for her three sons. She demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting her children's mental and behavioral health needs and has utilized New Hampshire's FAST Forward Wraparound program to ensure her children and family have access to the services and support they need.

Kayla has worked to build connections to resources for her family, including the state's Transitional Enhanced Care Program, educational advocates, medical providers, and therapists. In doing so, she has established relationships with her children's providers to ensure they have a strong team. Remaining connected to her children and understanding their interests is a priority for Kayla, and she works to create opportunities for memories to be made and fun to be had, understanding the importance of this for her children's wellbeing.

Balancing her son's appointments, multiple jobs, and family obligations, Kayla ensures there are opportunities for connection demonstrating a strong understanding of the importance of relationships in navigating challenges. Kayla models self-care for her children, leaning on her supports in times of need and crocheting. This demonstrates resilience and encourages the same for her sons. Having overcome challenges in her own life, Kayla works hard to support her children.

Kayla's understanding of her children's unique needs, where to find support, and how to advocate for herself and her children speaks to her commitment as a parent. She demonstrates clear dedication to the wellbeing of her family and has worked to build an environment in the home and community where her children can thrive, making her an incredible Unsung Hero. Congratulations, Kayla!

Kristen

A mom to six daughters, Kristen is a strong advocate and mentor within the state's adoption community, freely sharing her knowledge and experience to help support other adoptive families. As leaders of a local church, Kristen and her husband have built strong social connections by giving back to their community, and in turn, have built a community that gives back to them when support is needed.

Navigating complex medical diagnoses and procedures, Kristen demonstrates resilience and utilizes her community to build support for herself and her family. Understanding the impact of foster care and adoption, Kristen views her children as individuals and does everything she can to meet their unique needs. Through changes in plans and unexpected medical visits, Kristen models self-regulation and resilience for her children and family.

A dedicated mother and advocate for her children, Kristen supports each of her children through their experiences with foster care and adoption, understanding that this can be a complicated and confusing journey for children. Kristen ensures that her children know they are loved and that their feelings are valued as they work through their experiences, which she in turn models for other foster families. Always seeking new information and approaching parenting in a proactive manner, Kristen supports her children's journeys to healing while also helping other foster families and children navigate their own journeys as a mentor. Kristen's commitment to her children, her family, and her community demonstrates her selflessness and dedication to those in her life. Because of this, she is truly an Unsung Hero. Congratulations, Kristen!

Mitchell & Chris

Mitchell and her partner Chris stepped in to raise Mitchell's 16 year old niece, offering support at a critical time of need. While neither of them had children, both Mitchell and Chris approached this thoughtfully and worked hard to provide support to Mitchell's niece in school and in life, navigating trauma and adolescent development. Understanding the unique developmental needs of a teenager, Mitchell and Chris are open to seeking support when needed to ensure they are providing the best care possible for their niece.

Modeling empathy and grace while establishing and maintaining clear boundaries, this family has utilized their resources to ensure they had what they needed. Using support from kinship caregivers to build community aided Mitchell and Chris in their journey and highlights the importance of leaning on others.

With a background in disability services, Mitchell's experience compliments Chris' background in the military, resulting in parenting and communication styles that work well together to meet their niece's needs. Adapting to their changing family dynamic, Mitchell and Chris have worked collaboratively to foster an environment of open communication and safety. Aware of the role they play in their niece's life, Mitchell and Chris demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting her needs and providing a safe, stable home and family.

Mitchell and Chris have created an environment that is adaptive to the changing needs of their niece, informed by self-reflection, and an understanding of child development. Their commitment to navigating life's challenges as a family unit is commendable, and speaks to their dedication to raise their niece with love, support, and caring. Mitchell and Chris are incredible Unsung Heroes. Congratulations to you both!

Susan

Sue is a caregiver whose perseverance and support have led to meaningful change for her grandson, who she adopted. Parenting for a second time, Sue demonstrates resilience while fighting for the needs of her son, overcoming physical, emotional, and financial stressors to do so. Sue works with a vast pool of providers to ensure that her child's needs are met, and that he feels safe, loved, and accepted.

When her son was in need, Sue engaged in services through Connected Families Wraparound program before pursuing residential treatment for her child, going above and beyond to support her son through his out of home placement. Steadfast in her dedication, Sue drove between 800-1600 miles a month to visit her child, ensuring that he had opportunities to go into the community, engage in family therapy, and return home for visits. Throughout this experience and others, Sue emphasizes her son's developmental and emotional needs and encourages his personality to shine.

A strong advocate for her son, Sue has cultivated a comprehensive support system that has become attuned to the needs of her family, and is made up of friends, family, and professionals. Throughout their journey, Sue and her son have built a relationship based on unconditional acceptance, love, and support, focused on partnership and action.

Sue's unwavering commitment to her son is an incredible example of resilience in the face of hardship. By modeling unconditional love, care, and compassion, Sue supported her child and family in receiving the supports and services they needed to thrive. Throughout her son's treatment, Sue acted as a partner and remained engaged, connected, and supportive, creating an environment in which positive change could endure. This deep commitment emphasizes exactly why Sue is an Unsung Hero. Congratulations, Sue!



Congratulations Awardees!

Follow us on social media and help us
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