

**News from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Grafton area resident receives child welfare award

BISMARCK, N.D. –The North Dakota Department of Human Services presented Walsh County State’s Attorney Barbara Whelan with the 2007 Outstanding Legal Advocate award at the 2007 Children and Family Services Conference in Bismarck on July 26. Whelan and 11 other individuals were honored for their leadership, personal accomplishments, and efforts on behalf of foster children and families.

“The award recipients exemplify the best of the best and are nominated by their peers in the child welfare system,” said Dawn Pearson of the department’s Children and Family Services Division.

Walsh County Social Services staff nominated Whelan for her advocacy on behalf of children and her efforts to support family reunification, while focusing on the best interests of each child. According to her nominators, Whelan is diligent in preparing cases and refuses to accept plea agreements on criminal sexual abuse cases. Whelan previously served as the Pembina County State’s Attorney and Walsh County Assistant State’s Attorney.

She participates in child welfare training and regional children and family services reviews, and is active in her faith community.

On any given day, about 1,400 children ranging in age from infants to 18 are in foster care in North Dakota, most as a result of neglect or abuse situations. The Department of Human Services, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations – Division of Juvenile Services, counties, private agencies, the Tribes, and foster parents provide child welfare services with the goal of keeping children safe, while also addressing permanency needs and child well-being.

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