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Tuesday, June 27, 2017
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Foster Youth honored for student success

(MADISON) – A special celebration was held today at the Wisconsin Executive Residence honoring the academic accomplishments of current and former foster youth. First Lady Tonette Walker gave the keynote speech during the Department of Children and Families' fifth annual Foster Youth Graduation Ceremony. She was joined by DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson and State Superintendent Tony Evers in recognizing these young adults for their recent graduations from high school or for reaching other post-secondary educational milestones.

"This event is a heartwarming way to honor the accomplishments of these special graduates," said First Lady Tonette Walker. "Foster youth often have faced significant trauma in their lives and frequently experience additional challenges during their academic journey, so it is my distinct privilege to be able to recognize these amazing and resilient young men and women. They serve as role models to other foster youth, and help to remind all of us about the power of perseverance."

Nationally, only about 54% of foster youth will graduate from high school and only 2% will go onto college. Most suffer not only the loss of their biological family, but might have had to face multiple foster home moves, changes in case workers and being uprooted from friends and schools. On average, foster children will move six times between kindergarten and 12th grade.

The twenty-seven graduates who were able to attend the celebration represented the 82 foster youth throughout Wisconsin who are known to have reached commencement in the 2016/17 academic year.

"These students prove that with hard work and determination, you can overcome life challenges, finish school, and give yourself a solid foundation for a successful future," said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson. "They are truly inspirations to us all."

Former foster youth, Holly Wilson, also spoke and inspired the graduates with the tale of her courageous journey towards healing and prosperity. Wilson, who is an active member of the Foster Care Alumni of America, currently works for Likekeepers, Inc., as a support specialist.

For more information on Wisconsin's foster care services or to find out how you can be a foster parent, please visit the Department of Children and Families website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/parent> or the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families website at www.fosterparentsrock.org.

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