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Bronson Koenig, Douglas Nelson, and Local High School Student Organization To Be Honored As Courageous Advocates

MADISON, WI – Kids Forward will honor two individuals and one organization with Giraffe Awards at its annual event, *Step Forward for Kids*. Giraffe Awards are given to individuals or organizations who have courageously advocated and worked to build a better future for Wisconsin’s children and families— notably for children and families of color and those furthest from opportunity. In essence, they have “stuck their neck out for children and families.”

Kids Forward will present Giraffe Awards to:

- **Bronson Koenig**, member of the Milwaukee Bucks and former Badger basketball standout;
- **Doug Nelson**, former president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation;
- **VAHSAid**, a student driven-organization working to eliminate poverty in Dane County and Wisconsin.

“In these increasingly challenging times, it’s imperative that we take a few moments to recognize those that are tirelessly working to fight injustice and improve the well-being of their communities,” said Kids Forward Executive Director Ken Taylor. “I am inspired by the work of our Giraffe Award winners and applaud their compassion and commitment to standing up for kids and families.”

The awards will be presented at the organization’s annual fundraising event, ***Step Forward for Kids: An Evening Celebrating Children and Families on September 28, 2017 at the Madison Children’s Museum.*** Tickets and sponsorships can be purchased online at www.kidsforward.net.

Additional information about each recipient follows.

Bronson Koenig, member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, former University of Wisconsin basketball star, and current member of the Milwaukee Bucks has wowed fans on-and-off the basketball court. During his time as a Wisconsin Badger, Koenig helped lead the team to two Final Four appearances and two Big Ten Conference Championships. Equally impressive is Koenig’s advocacy and commitment to helping improve the well-being of the Native American community. He has embraced being a role model for Native youth and has traveled throughout the country meeting and speaking with youth and hosting basketball clinics. In late 2016, Koenig traveled to the Standing Rock Sioux reservation to lend his

support to those protecting the land and water, and opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline. Koenig has also been vocal about opposing Native American names and images as sports mascots.

Douglas Nelson is retired President and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF). For more than 20 years, Nelson led AECF through one of the most remarkable and innovative transformations of a philanthropic organization—leading it from a moderately-sized regional institution providing foster care services to disadvantaged children to one of the nation's most influential and respected large foundations. In 2010, President Jimmy Carter commended Nelson's leadership, saying that "his service to our most disinvested and disenfranchised populations and to the overall betterment of America's philanthropic missions has been extraordinary and all too rare."

Among many other roles, Mr. Nelson serves as Chair of the CDC Foundation in Atlanta, GA; and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Carter Center. He is former Chair of Living Cities: The National Community Development Initiative and former Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation Center in New York City. Mr. Nelson currently serves as a Senior Advisor to the Race to Equity Project, a research-based initiative to increase racial equity in the state's capital county and across the state.

VAHSAid is a student driven-organization from Verona Area High School whose mission is to deliver aid to the impoverished citizens of Dane County and Wisconsin. In the spring of 2017, the group hosted a "camp out" to raise awareness about child poverty and food insecurity in Dane County and across Wisconsin. They were able to collect 2,333 pounds of items for the Badger Prairie Needs Network and \$1,037 for Kids Forward.

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Kids Forward, formerly the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, is the oldest multi-issue child advocacy organization in the country. Kids Forward advocates for effective, long-lasting solutions that break down barriers to success for children and families in Wisconsin. Using research and a community-informed approach, Kids Forward works to help every kid, every family, and every community thrive.