



AWARD OF
DISTINCTION

Heroism

2025

Ellen Haynes

*Litigation Training and Development Counsel,
Department of Social Services*

For extraordinary heroism, compassion, and selfless service. Ellen chose to donate a kidney to a Division of Legal Services contract attorney, enabling them to continue their vital work advocating for children in need of permanency and stability. Her life saving act reflects the very mission of the Department of Social Services and exemplifies the highest ideals of public service. Through her courage and generosity, Ellen has made a profound difference in the life of a colleague and in the lives of the children and families they serve.



Heroism

2025

Julie Teague

Correctional Officer III, Department of Corrections

For extraordinary heroism, courage, and selfless dedication to the safety of others. On January 7, 2025, Julie intervened when a young girl was being brutally attacked by multiple dogs, calling 911 and placing herself in harm's way to stop the attack and allow the child to escape. Despite sustaining severe injuries herself, Julie's decisive and fearless actions saved the young girl's life. Her bravery, commitment to protecting others, and unwavering sense of duty exemplify the highest ideals of public service. Julie was also awarded the Department of Corrections' Award of Valor in recognition of her remarkable act of courage.



AWARD OF
DISTINCTION

Human Relations

2025

Makenna Westhusing

Senior Social Services Specialist, Department of Social Services

For exceptional compassion, dedication, and steadfast support in serving children and colleagues. Makenna worked tirelessly with Texas prosecutors and law enforcement to ensure two children in custody were prepared and protected during a difficult trial, traveling with them, staying by their side, and offering comfort through every step of the process. Despite unexpected challenges and personal sacrifices, she remained a calming, stabilizing presence while also assisting a newer case manager through the demanding experience. Her professionalism, courage, and unwavering commitment exemplify the highest standards of Human Relations, inspiring those around her and strengthening the team mission.



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DISTINCTION**

Human Relations

2025

Melissa Hall

Park Superintendent, Department of Natural Resources

For exceptional leadership, compassion, and commitment to the growth and well being of others. Throughout many years of service, Melissa has consistently demonstrated integrity, collaboration, and respect, ensuring her team feels supported, valued, and empowered. Her mentorship has helped team members develop confidence, pursue advancement opportunities, and navigate both professional and personal challenges. Melissa leads with empathy and dedication, fostering a positive work environment where teamwork thrives and individuals are encouraged to reach their full potential. Her unwavering support, belief in others, and devotion to the mission of the Missouri State Parks have made a lasting impact on her team and the Knob Noster State Park community.



**AWARD OF
DISTINCTION**

Innovation

2025

Shelby Tate

Sunshine Unit Manager, Department of Social Services

For exceptional innovation, dedication, and leadership in modernizing the Department of Social Service's records request process. Stepping into a new role, Shelby helped develop and implement the Records Request Portal, transforming a two year backlog into a fully resolved workload within months. Her commitment to accuracy, customer service, and continuous improvement reduced request turnaround times from 45 days to just 9 days. Shelby's drive to understand complex requests, advance department systems, and strengthen internal processes exemplifies the highest standards of innovation. Her vision and hard work have significantly improved service to the public and elevated efficiency across the department.



AWARD OF
DISTINCTION

Innovation

2025

Matthew Petty

Correctional Case Manager II, Department of Corrections

For exceptional innovation, leadership, and commitment to offender rehabilitation. As Case Manager III overseeing the Reentry Unit, Matt developed and launched the S.T.E.P. Up (Self Transformative Empowerment Plan) program, an incentive based system that encourages positive behavior, educational achievement, and personal growth. His forward thinking approach, created in collaboration with facility residents, has resulted in more than 1,400 participants, with over 900 actively engaged each month and a 95% conduct violation free rate among participants. Through creative problem solving, strong coordination, and a genuine dedication to helping others succeed, Matt transformed reentry programming and strengthened opportunities for successful reintegration. His work exemplifies the highest standards of innovation and service.



AWARD OF
DISTINCTION

Leadership

2025

Andrew White

Family Nurse Practitioner, Department of Mental Health

For exemplary leadership, compassion, and unwavering commitment to patient care at the Fulton State Hospital. Rising through the ranks from aide to doctoral level FNP, Andrew brings exceptional clinical expertise and humanity to his work with both forensic and short stay patients. He cares for individuals with dignity and respect, addressing every concern with thorough follow up and a genuine desire to help. Andrew's dedication extends beyond discharge, creating thoughtful care plans that support patients' long term well being. He leads through collaboration, values nurses' insights, fosters teamwork, and ensures every voice is heard. Andrew's professionalism, empathy, and steadfast belief in rehabilitation have made a profound impact on patients and staff alike, embodying the highest ideals of leadership.



**AWARD OF
DISTINCTION**

Leadership

2025

Jessica Martin

Senior Program Specialist, Department of Social Services

For exceptional leadership, vision, and dedication in strengthening Missouri's response to missing and exploited children. Since joining the Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit in 2024, Jessica has built vital partnerships with local, state, and federal law enforcement, leading coordinated efforts to protect youth at risk of trafficking. Her leadership guided statewide planning for the World Cup, advanced multidisciplinary collaboration, and driven innovative initiatives, including a Show Me Challenge project to develop specialized foster homes for vulnerable children. Jessica independently revised key policies, improved trafficking screening tools, and modernized data systems to ensure real time, transparent information for decision makers. Through her initiative, expertise, and unwavering commitment to child safety, Jessica has elevated the work of the Children's Division and earned the deep gratitude of the regions she serves.



**AWARD OF
DISTINCTION**

Public Service

2025

Kelly Ourth

Senior Social Service Specialist, Department of Mental Health

For outstanding public service, unwavering dedication, and exceptional support to the individuals and families she serves. With many years of service and commitment, Kelly consistently goes above and beyond, coordinating services, building strong community partnerships, and securing critical resources for those in need. Known for her compassion, expertise, and “we can do it” attitude, she has assisted families on evenings and weekends, mentored team members, and provided guidance across units with patience and accuracy. Her tireless advocacy helped transition a young man from long term hospitalization to a safe home in the community. Kelly’s leadership, resilience, and heartfelt devotion make her an invaluable asset to the department and a true example of service at its best.



**AWARD OF
DISTINCTION**

Public Service

2025

Patricia Hosack

*Occupational Safety and Health Consultant, Department of Labor
and Industrial Relations*

For exemplary public service, vigilance, and swift action that protected an entire facility from a potentially life threatening chemical hazard. Upon detecting a dangerous chemical reaction at a social service center, Patricia immediately recognized the risk, advised evacuation, and coordinated with emergency responders to ensure the safety of staff and visitors. Her expertise and decisive response prevented serious harm, safeguarded the community, and enabled operations to safely resume. Patricia's commitment to safety and her dedication to protecting others reflect the highest ideals of public service.



AWARD OF
DISTINCTION

Safety

2025

Donna Philpot

Project Manager, Department of Transportation

For exceptional awareness, decisive action, and commitment to public safety. While traveling to work on December 19, 2024, Donna identified significant structural damage to the Route AA bridge and immediately alerted the proper MoDOT teams. Her swift response led to the rapid closure and inspection of the bridge, protecting thousands of daily travelers on both Route AA and Route 60 from a potentially catastrophic failure. Donna's attentiveness set in motion an emergency replacement project and ensured timely public communication. Her vigilance, professionalism, and dedication to safety exemplify the highest standards of service.



AWARD OF
DISTINCTION

Safety

2025

Lawrence Lynch

Arrest Program Administrator, Department of Corrections

For outstanding leadership, expertise, and dedication to public safety as the Division of Probation and Parole's Arrest Program Administrator. Since assuming the critical role in 2023, Lawrence has expanded and strengthened the arrest team, significantly growing its officer membership and guiding the successful apprehension of more than 1,300 probation and parole violators. His nationally recognized training methods emphasize safety and professionalism, resulting in an exceptionally low Use of Force rate of just one percent. Through his experience, collaboration with local law enforcement, and unwavering commitment to protecting communities, Lawrence has elevated Missouri's arrest operations and exemplified excellence in safety leadership.