

# Child & Family

Caring for our Rhode Island Community since 1866

**Keynote Client Speech: Amanda Carlson**

**Child & Family's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Townsend Luncheon: June 21, 2023**

Good afternoon, my name is Amanda Carlson. I would like to start by thanking you all for being here today. My history with Child & Family first began at a very young age and continues to be a major support for my family as they help me raise my children.

At an early age, my siblings and I experienced an unstable home with domestic violence issues which is what led us to be placed in foster care. When we were reunited, my mother, siblings, and I lived at Child & Family's Winslow Place, the former name for Child & Family's Supportive Housing Program. This is where I met Child & Family Case Managers, Cathy Diaz and Edna Davis, may their souls rest in peace. They were such strong advocates for my family. The program involved our entire family in support meetings to help us work together to strengthen our family after the trauma we went through. With their support, my mother graduated through the program, married my stepfather, and together they maintained a safe, stable, and loving home for my siblings and me.

When I was in middle school, I started volunteering at Child & Family's daycare, which is now called [Sandpipers Early Learning Center](#). I enjoyed working with children. If you were looking for me, you would find me with the babies. I volunteered at the daycare for about three years until I became pregnant with my first son, Braylin. I received a job offer and continued working there for about a year. Unfortunately, I had to leave because my son was experiencing health issues and I was unable to do both.

Fast forward several years later: I am now a single mom to 4 amazing children. I met Heather Bishop, a Case Manager with Child & Family, when I was referred to their [Family Care Community Partnership \(FCCP\)](#) program. At the time we were all living apart except for my daughter due to an unimaginable life event that led to being homeless. Heather helped me with housing applications and one particularly important one to Child & Family's [Supportive Housing Program](#).

I entered the Supportive Housing Program in May of 2022 and was able to reunify with all my children under one roof. Child & Family's Supportive Housing Program has provided us with a community of support and wraparound services. Within my first 48 hours of joining the program, I saw what a caring and supportive environment this would be.

With COVID at its highest, my youngest child was very sick, and in need of a thermometer. I called Heather to ask if she had one. Her response was "I do not, but give me a minute" and within minutes, she was at my door with several types.

# Child & Family

## Caring for our Rhode Island Community since 1866

We all know the difficulty of raising children, and it is even harder when you are doing it alone. With Child & Family, I do not feel alone, I feel supported. I know I can reach out and ask for help in the community I have built within Supportive Housing. Child & Family has been there from the beginning of my life and continues to make my family stronger.

My stepfather, Michael Whipple, is here today. He stepped up and continues to be a dedicated support for my children and me. Thank you, Dad. My two oldest children are here to support me as well. My oldest son Braylin continues to amaze me with his strength and unconditional love throughout everything. My only daughter, Kaylee, is a creative artist, incredibly caring, and can find positivity in everything and everyone. They have seen the growth I have made, and I see how this change in me, is impacting them in positive ways. My mother would love to be here to support me, but she is living in California. We have a healthy, positive relationship. She has been sober for 7-years and has never been happier. Child & Family has given me hope that no matter what life throws at me, I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.

I do not know where we would be without Child & Family, especially the Supportive Housing Program. Thank you for providing my family a safe place to reunite as a family once again.