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News release

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Dr. Rita Ventura honored as 2021 Connie Reyes Award winner

KENOSHA — A driving force behind the Kenosha County Child Advocacy Center since its inception is the recipient of the 2021 Connie Reyes Award for Excellence in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention.

Dr. Rita Ventura received the honors during a celebration held virtually last week.

Ventura, a family nurse practitioner with Children’s Wisconsin, was a key member of a team of professionals who worked together 20 years ago to integrate the Kenosha County Child Advocacy Center into the coordinated response to allegations of child abuse and neglect.

Dr. Ventura is a specialist in conducting trauma informed forensic medical exams of children who have been possible victims of child abuse or child neglect. This along with a forensic interview provides a record of the maltreatment children have suffered, aids in any future court proceedings, and reduces the likelihood that child victims will need to testify in court.

Serving on behalf of the Care4Kids partnership between Children’s Wisconsin and various state and county agencies, Ventura also conducts health care screenings for virtually all children entering foster care in Kenosha County. She uses her expertise to help foster parents get a good, comprehensive look at any medical needs that these children may have.

“Dr. Ventura has a long, esteemed record of caring and advocating for children in need, while making sure that foster parents have the tools to care for these kids effectively and lovingly,” said Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser. “That coupled with her prolific service to our community makes Dr. Ventura the ideal recipient of this year’s Connie Reyes Award.”

The award honors Reyes, a Kenosha County social worker who was murdered on April 12, 1990, as a tragic result of her work serving children and families in the community. The honors have been given annually since 2015, except for last year when the program was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of Reyes’ family were in the audience for this year’s event.

Speaking to colleagues, family, friends and public officials from her home during the April 22 videoconference program, Ventura said she is greatly honored to receive the award.

“It has been so rewarding to be a part of the transition and continual improvement to the child advocacy model in my community,” Ventura said. “I am grateful for the multidisciplinary team members and Children’s Wisconsin team of professionals I work with who make it possible to provide quality care and positively impact the population of children and families we serve.”

A native of Kenosha, Ventura earned a Bachelor of Science in nursing from Marquette University, a Master of Science in nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Marquette.

In addition to her work with Children’s Wisconsin and the Kenosha County Child Advocacy Center, she serves as a member of the Kenosha County Board of Health, the Wisconsin Drug-Endangered Children Steering Committee, the Wisconsin Child Abuse Network Steering Committee, the Kenosha County Organizational Review Committee, the Kenosha County Child Death Review Committee and the Kenosha County Sexual Assault Response Team.

Ventura’s passion for her work has led her to raise awareness of child abuse and neglect throughout the community and throughout Wisconsin, said Ron Rogers, director of the Kenosha County Division of Children and Family Services.

“Dr. Ventura has been instrumental locally and statewide on all issues related to child abuse and neglect,” Rogers said. “She has a wealth of information for the entire community, and her long tenure as the Child Abuse Medical Specialist within our Kenosha County Child Advocacy Center makes her an invaluable resource to our community.”

More information about the Kenosha County Child Advocacy Center is available at <https://childrenswi.org/location-directory/locations/child-advocacy-center/kenosha-county-child-advocacy-center>. To learn more about the Kenosha County Division of Children and Family Services and the programs it offers to promote the safety and well-being of children and families, visit <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/241/Children-Family-Services>.

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