



**CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE**

*A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Outstanding Advocates Receive 2012 Voices for Children Awards**

(June 11, 2012) — At its annual luncheon on June 7, the Children's Alliance presented awards to three outstanding advocates who have worked to improve the lives of children and families in Washington state.

Children's Alliance has recognized advocates with Voices for Children Awards since 1993. Each of this year's awardees has been a critical partner in Children's Alliance's work to create public policies that work for kids.

These advocates pushed for equity for all kids. They pressed the Governor and the State Legislature to be accountable to all children, regardless of where they or their parents come from. They are redefining our sense of advocacy by fighting not just for today's kids but for the generations that follow. And they demonstrate that we do more when we stand together than we do alone.

The following awardees were honored at the Children's Alliance's Voices for Children luncheon:

### **Jiji Jally**

"Hunger, for any kid...you can't stand that," says Jiji Jally. She organized people from her homeland of the Marshall Islands, bringing their voices and faces to Olympia when legislators threatened to end the State Food Assistance Program. "It was hard to tell everyone: 'We need to be there. It's very important.' It was hard to explain it and get folks out." Despite the difficulties, Jally did succeed in getting her community to Olympia to share their stories, and their efforts made a difference. The State Food Assistance program in Washington is a lifeline for documented immigrants, who come from some 160 countries and are excluded

from federal food stamps. SFA was severely cut in the 2011 state budget. This year Jiji was a Rising Star whose advocacy leadership was critical to preventing more cuts to food support for 12,500 children in our state. [Read more about Jiji Jally.](#)

### **Washington Parent Ambassadors**

Parent Ambassadors championed the High-Quality Early Learning Act of 2012, showing up in huge numbers – moms, dads, kids – to speak up for the bill each time it was considered. They descended on Olympia at a pivotal time for the Working Connections Child Care program. In the end, the state child care program was not only protected, but also restored to more than 2,000 working parents who'd been cut off in 2010. Who are these amazing Parent Ambassadors? Each year, 20 parents whose children are enrolled in Head Start or ECEAP sign up and receive training in advocacy for the basic needs of children. “The empowerment they feel just spreads like wildfire,” says a former Ambassador who now mentors trainees. The peer-to-peer training offered to Parent Ambassadors by the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP “gets people to realize that it’s really easy to have a voice.” [Read more about the Washington Parent Ambassadors.](#)

### **Swinomish Indian Tribal Community**

You were in pain, you went and had your teeth pulled. This was true for generations of Swinomish until their dental clinic opened in 1995. Still, the Tribe wanted to do more to meet the demand for preventive and regular oral health care. Now the Swinomish are leaders in the effort to create licensed dental practitioners in Washington. The new, mid-level provider would offer affordable dental care to children and families – not only in the Tribe’s community on the shores of Puget Sound, but for children in underserved communities across the state. Swinomish Chairman Brian Cladoosby and others shared their stories with lawmakers in support of the bill championed by Children’s Alliance in the 2012 session. The bill didn’t pass this year, but the partnership of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Children’s Alliance and many others shows how advocacy works better when we work together. [Read more about the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community.](#)

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*Children’s Alliance is a statewide public policy advocacy organization that works at the state and federal level to ensure that all children have what they need to thrive. To learn more about Children’s Alliance, go to [www.childrensalliance.org](http://www.childrensalliance.org).*