



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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## **Kim Kurklis honored as 2023 Connie Reyes Award winner**

A renowned advocate for children with special needs in the Kenosha Unified School District is the recipient of the 2023 Connie Reyes Award for Excellence in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention.

Kim Kurklis received the honors Thursday at the Kenosha County Job Center, during a ceremony packed with family, friends and colleagues.

Kurklis, who is now retired, had a longtime career focused on helping children and families as an Early Childhood Special Education Diagnostician for KUSD. In that role, Kurklis screened and evaluated young children for possible developmental delays and worked to link children and families to the appropriate services and education.

She also worked as a Program Support Teacher at various elementary schools throughout the KUSD and later served as the district's Head Start Disabilities Coordinator and as the interim Head Start principal, among other duties, and was involved in many community activities advocating for child abuse and neglect prevention.

"Kim's work over nearly four decades is an inspiration to us all, and her efforts have undoubtedly had a positive effect on many children and families," said Kenosha County Executive Samantha Kerkman. "She is a most deserving recipient of the Connie Reyes Award."

The award honors Reyes, a Kenosha County social worker who worked with families that had experienced child abuse and neglect. On April 12, 1990, she tragically lost her life while serving these children and families. The award honors her while recognizing individuals today who work to protect children and strengthen families.

"I am honored to receive this award on behalf of all those who support the protective factors by assisting families in finding resources and supports that emphasize their

strengths, while also identifying areas where they need assistance,” Kurklis said, “thereby reducing the chances of child abuse and neglect.”

A Kenosha native, Kurklis earned a Bachelor of Science in special education-early childhood from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and a Master of Science in education, curriculum and instruction from National Louis University. She has also served as an adjunct instructor at Concordia University.

Along with the award, presented by Kerkman, Kurklis received a state legislative proclamation from Rep. Tod Ohnstad, Kurklis’ brother-in-law.

Kenosha County Division of Children and Family Services Director Ron Rogers said Kurklis throughout her career promoted positive parenting and led efforts to promote the physical, mental, social and emotional well-being of children throughout Kenosha County.

Also, Rogers said, she championed the importance of childhood — of the first six years of life, in particular — and the need for a safe, stable, nurturing environment for all children.

“All of these efforts throughout her long and successful career make Kim Kurklis a very worthy recipient of the Connie Reyes Award for Excellence in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention,” Rogers said.

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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