



VANDERHEYDEN

Giving new life to youth, adults and families

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vanderheyden Team Member Honored with 2026 Jim Purcell Excellence Award

Michelle Perrott recognized for extraordinary service to children, youth, and families

Wynantskill, NY — June 8, 2026 — Vanderheyden announced that Michelle Perrott, Direct Support Professional, has been recognized with a 2026 Jim Purcell Excellence Award by the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), a statewide association representing nonprofit child and family-serving organizations across New York.

The award was presented during COFCCA's annual virtual Jim Purcell Excellence Award Ceremony on May 29 and recognizes frontline professionals who demonstrate exceptional compassion, leadership, and commitment in serving children, youth, and families.

Perrott was honored for her unwavering commitment to supporting youth through everyday challenges and life-changing moments alike. "Michelle exemplifies the compassion, professionalism, and dedication that define this work," said Karen Carpenter, President & CEO of Vanderheyden, "We are thrilled to see Michelle recognized with this honor. Her courage and quick actions in helping save the life of an individual in our care reflect the extraordinary commitment she brings to her role every day. Beyond that moment, Michelle consistently goes above and beyond to support the growth, well-being, and success of the youth and families we serve. We are incredibly proud of all she has accomplished and know her future is bright."

Named in honor of longtime child welfare leader Jim Purcell, the award recognizes staff at COFCCA member agencies whose work exemplifies excellence in service to children and families.

"These honorees represent the very best of New York's child and family-serving workforce," said **Kathleen Brady-Stepien, President and CEO of COFCCA**. "Every day, they help children, youth, and families navigate incredibly difficult circumstances with compassion, professionalism, and care. Their work often happens quietly and behind the scenes, but it changes lives and strengthens communities across our state."

"We must support and uplift the dedicated professionals who form the bedrock of New York State's child welfare system," said **NY State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey**. "Frontline workers face immense challenges every day, navigating complex crises to protect the safety and well-being of our most

vulnerable children and families. The Jim Purcell Awards recognize their extraordinary service, commitment, and standard for excellence across our state. I congratulate Melvyna McCallister, Vinnette Hylton, Billy Filmore, Rachel Sanchez, Jinhua Tan, Gary Hull, Guadalupe ‘Lupe’ Rodriguez, Denise Culkin, Iliana Padro, Davaughn Stewart, Elijah Sanford, and Michelle Perrott for your work. By honoring these twelve exceptional individuals, we reinforce our collective responsibility to ensure a safer, more supportive environment for future generations. We see you, and we appreciate you.”

The 2026 Jim Purcell Excellence Award recipients are:

- € Melvyna McCallister, Intake Coordinator, Astor Services
- € Vinnette Hylton, Case Planner, Cardinal McCloskey Community Services
- € Billy Filmore, Career Development Specialist, Catholic Guardian
- € Rachel Sanchez, Manager of Quality Assurance, Children’s Village
- € Jinhua Tan, Case Aide, Chinese-American Planning Council
- € Gary Hull, Youth Development Professional, Elmcrest
- € Guadalupe (Lupe) Rodriguez, Foster Care Case Planner, Forestdale
- € Denise Culkin, Home Finder, Hillside
- € Iliana Padro, Senior Residential Counselor, Hope for Youth
- € Davaughn Stewart, Residential Treatment Center Nighttime Supervisor, St. John’s Residence for Boys
- € Elijah Sanford, Residential Operations Coordinator, Timothy Hill
- € **Michelle Perrott, Direct Support Professional, Vanderheyden**

About Vanderheyden

Vanderheyden began as the Troy Orphan Asylum in 1833 and has been providing services for more than 190 years. Today our facilities offer a safe haven for youth, adults and families who have experienced family disruption, trauma, abuse, emotional difficulty, developmental disability, and learning problems. The Richard A. Desrochers Educational Center at Vanderheyden is a Regents accredited 7-12 grade program. It provides education to individuals who are at risk of not succeeding at school, and those in need of a special education. Vanderheyden is a designated Children and Family Treatment and Support Services Provider (CFTSS). The agency is committed to a family-focused, trauma-informed, and community-based system of care. Every day at Vanderheyden, we work to change lives to save lives. For more information, visit www.vanderheyden.org and follow us on social media.

About COFCCA

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) is the principal representative for nearly all the not-for-profit organizations providing foster care, adoption, family preservation, and juvenile justice services in New York State. COFCCA is comprised of over 100 member organizations, ranging in size from small community-based programs to the nation’s largest multi-services agencies — all of which share the mission of serving children and families.



Vanderheyden is a charitable 501(c)(3) corporation. Charitable gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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