

HART Shining Star Winners Announcement for Webpage

HART Shining Star Awards

The HART shining star awards is a new initiative to honor the exceptional work being done by DCF staff, HART Committee Members, and community providers in CT whose focus is on eradicating human trafficking as well as empowering victims of this crime. Our recipients this quarter are:

Leadership Award

Latoya Lowery
HART Liaison
Norwalk DCF



Latoya Lowery is a knowledgeable individual with over 14 years of experience in substance abuse and social work. Ms. Lowery has a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Southern Connecticut University and Masters in Social Work from Fordham University. In addition to being a Social Worker, she became a credentialed Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC), an Internationally Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (ICADC) and a Certified Addictions Counselor (CAC).

Ms. Lowery has over 8 years of experience in Child Welfare and has held various roles within the Department of Children and Families. She is currently a Social Work Supervisor, Human-Anti Response Team Liaison (HART), Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) trainer for Region 1 and most recently the chair of the MDT/HART Data committee. She is also a trained facilitator for the “Not a Number” and “My Life, My Choice” curriculums. She continues to be committed to working with this population and helping Connecticut’s most vulnerable youth. In addition to her work with the state she serves as the Vice Chair of the Board for Covenant to Care for Children.

“Latoya is one of the hardest working supervisors I know at DCF. Latoya is dedicated and committed to helping families. Latoya’s passion lies in the work of human trafficking and she has been instrumental in educating our region and providers in this cause. Latoya’s stretches out her work day to work nights and she comes in with a smile and pleasant manner every single day.” Yolanda Chapman Smith, Office Director

Community Award

Sergeant Jason Amato
Bridgeport Police Department

Sergeant Jason Amato was hired by the Bridgeport Police Department in 2002. He has worked in the Patrol for the east and central area of the city, NET team (Neighborhood Enforcement Team) and the Gang Task Force. He is a decorated police officer in the city of Bridgeport. He has received the Meritorious Service award, the Medal of Merit and the Excellent Arrest award. He does numerous trainings statewide and nationally on gang and narcotics awareness education. He now includes domestic minor sex trafficking in his trainings. Sergeant Amato was instrumental in the rescue of a DCF minor who was missing for weeks and was being trafficked. Sergeant Amato’s commitment to ensuring the safety of our children and his excellent police skills lead to the timely rescue of this youth.

“Sgt. Amato didn’t think twice when I asked him for help looking for Mary. Mary had been missing for more than 6 weeks. Sgt. Amato found her in 24 hours and he literally saved her life.” Carmen Torres, Mary’s Social Worker