

**Andrew Jackson Higgins
Excellence in Juvenile Justice Award
Thursday, October 24, 2019**



The Recipient

Tammy Walden is the Chief Juvenile Officer in the 26th Judicial Circuit, which includes Camden, Laclede, Miller, Morgan and Moniteau counties; she began her career with the court in 1980 and will soon be completing her 40th year of service. Tammy was born in Rogers, Arkansas, and raised in Springfield, Missouri where she worked for the Springfield Police Department and graduated from Drury University with a degree in Criminal Justice.

Tammy demonstrates the highest level of professionalism and subject matter expertise related to juvenile justice and child welfare and her commitment to furthering justice, best practices, cooperation and a standard of excellence collectively make her an outstanding leader and asset to the Missouri court system. She embodies each element of the juvenile officer code of professional ethics and elevates the profession.

In her capacity as juvenile officer, Tammy has tirelessly served in state-level initiatives and advocated for reforms to benefit children in the state and further the mission of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association and the judiciary. Tammy is or was an active participant in more than fifteen steering committees, work/advisory groups, and professional organizations contributing to system improvements, the introduction of crossover youth initiatives, preventing child sexual abuse and the development of the standards for juvenile officers in Missouri.

Through Tammy's leadership, an important element of the Missouri Juvenile Officer Performance Standards has been implemented and is improving practice in child welfare. She also contributed to the new efforts surrounding "children with problem sexual behaviors". She specifically initiated Fostering Court Improvement, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and Crossover Youth Program in the 26th Circuit and led efforts to ensure timely permanency hearings in 100% of cases each year.

Necessary change and reforms are usually met with resistance. Tammy's cooperative leadership style and ability to engage, influence and inform stakeholders and others in a collaborative manner led her to securing the necessary buy-in and agreements required for system change.

Tammy serves as one of the main faculty for the Fundamental Skills for the Juvenile Justice Professional course; a trainer for the Missouri Police Chiefs Association Advanced School Resource Officer training and conducts training locally for law enforcement agencies in her respective counties.

Tammy is a member of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association (MJJA) and has served on the MJJA Board of Directors as a Board Member and MJJA Board President. She currently serves on the Executive Team as Treasurer. Tammy's leadership has ensured that MJJA continues to be the recognized leader in Missouri on both state and national juvenile justice issues while remaining true to the mission of promoting justice for children, youth and families.