

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Foster Parents Inducted into Hall of Fame

Pensacola, Fla. (December 16, 2020) – FamiliesFirst Network of Lakeview Center is proud to announce that on December 1, two foster parent couples were inducted into the All Pro Dad Foster and Adoptive Parent Hall of Fame. All Pro contributor and retired NFL football safety, coach and sports analyst Tony Dungy presented the awards.

Merrie and David Schwartz have provided more than 32 years of service to caring for children in Florida who have severe medically complex issues. The couple has fostered more than 100 children born addicted to drugs, alcohol, or living with AIDS, developmental disabilities, tracheotomies or feeding tubes, children who are deaf, and children confined to wheelchairs. The couple adopted 13 children during their time as foster parents accepting children of all ages, races and disabilities. Their love for children has no boundaries.

Julie and Tony Secchiari have been licensed foster parents with FamiliesFirst Network (FFN) since 2009, but were previously licensed in other states. Cumulatively they have fostered children for 25 years. Since 2009, the couple has provided care for nearly 500 children in Northwest Florida. During that time, they adopted three children and are currently in the process of adopting their fourth. The couple exemplifies a strong commitment to children in foster care through accepting placement of sibling groups, children of all ages, children with behavioral issues, and placements in the middle of the night. Above all, they co-parent with biological families in the hopes of successful reunifications.

All Pro Dad is a national nonprofit educational and charitable organization made possible by the Florida Department of Children and Families of which FFN is the lead agency in Northwest Florida. Twelve families were selected from across the state of Florida for their ability to provide stable and supportive environments where children can heal from the trauma of separation and thrive. The ceremony was hosted by Dungy using Zoom technology wherein he personally spoke with the parents who expressed humble appreciation.

Learn more about foster and adoption at FamiliesFirstNetwork.org.

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For more information about this press release or to schedule an interview, please contact Tish Pennewill at 850.469.3621 or Tish.Pennewill@bhcpns.org.

About FamiliesFirst Network of Lakeview Center, Inc.

Under a contract with the state of Florida, FamiliesFirst Network is responsible for the safety, stability and well-being of abused and neglected children in northern Florida's four westernmost counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton. Our Mission is to help people throughout life's journey. Our services include protective supervision, foster parent recruitment, adoptive parent recruitment, and specialized help for teens and young adults preparing to leave the foster care system. A program of Lakeview Center, FamiliesFirst Network served more than 3,800 children in 2018 alone. To learn more, go to FamiliesFirstNetwork.org.

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