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Governor Tony Evers  
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## **Foster Youth honored for academic achievement**

(MADISON) – The seventh annual Foster Youth Graduation Celebration was held today at the Executive Residence to honor a special group of Wisconsin students. Governor Tony Evers and First Lady Kathy Evers joined Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary-designee Emilie Amundson in recognizing former foster youth who recently graduated from high school, completed milestones in post-secondary education, or who attained certain other educational achievements.

“Kathy and I are proud of these graduates and honored to be part of this important milestone in their lives,” said Governor Tony Evers. “A degree brings with it a wealth of opportunity. That is why we must continue to recognize the unique needs many of our students face and ensure all kids get the educational supports they need to succeed.”

Nationally, only about 54% of foster youth will graduate from high school and only 2% will go onto college. Most suffer not only the loss of their biological family, but might have had to face multiple foster home moves, changes in caseworkers and being uprooted from friends and schools.

The thirty-four graduates who were able to attend the celebration represented the 103 foster youth throughout Wisconsin who are known to have reached commencement in the 2018/19 academic year.

“These young men and women have overcome adversity and prospered in achieving their goals,” said DCF Secretary-designee Amundson. “Their experience and perspective is something to be valued as a means to helping others who face similar challenges. I have no doubt that they will continue on to do amazing things as they start their next chapter of life.”

Former foster youth Cierrena Spataro-Haynes of Madison also spoke, and inspired the graduates with the tale of her brave journey towards academic and career success. Spataro-Haynes, who was a congressional foster youth intern in the Office of Senator Ron Johnson, currently works as a treatment foster care social worker.

For more information on Wisconsin's foster care services or to find out how you can be a foster parent, please visit the Department of Children and Families website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/parent> or the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families website at [www.fosterparentsrock.org](http://www.fosterparentsrock.org).

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