



Center for Developmentally Disabled      1010 West 39th Kansas City, MO 64111      (816) 531-0045

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PHOTOS ATTACHED**

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**Center for Developmentally Disabled Celebrates Two Prestigious Awards**

*eitas Recognizes Two Persons from CDD for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Field*

**Kansas City, MO:** The Center for Developmentally Disabled (CDD) is proud to announce that two individuals from within the organization will be receiving honors at the 2017 Annual eitas Awards Dinner on the evening of Tuesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The award recipients are CDD Program Coordinator Jody Michael and Steven Devero, an individual who has been receiving CDD services for 42 years.

The eitas Awards are among the highest honors in the field of developmental disabilities in Jackson County and the greater Kansas City metropolitan area, recognizing individuals with developmental disabilities who have had positive successes in their personal lives and professionals who have helped bring about success for the people they support.

Steven will be receiving the *Dr. John McGee Spirit of Gentleness Award*. Candidates for this award represent humbleness and humility and successfully teaches others to feel safe, loved, and engaged through their own presence, words, touch, and gaze. “Their presence brings a message of peace. Their words uplift. Their touch is gentle. Their gaze is warm and nurturing.”

Steven was nominated for his “Warm Fuzzies” project. Warm Fuzzies are little fuzzy puffball creatures that bring happiness and comfort to people. Inspired by the Claude M Steiner story of the same title, Steve began creating Warm Fuzzies in his home. He handed them out to roommates when he sensed they were having a bad day, then staff, then the mailman, police officers, and firemen. One hot day he asked his driver to pull over on the side of the road so he could give Fuzzies to construction workers, accompanied with an ice cold can of soda, and a hug. Word about Steve’s Warm Fuzzies went global when in September 2016 he shared his story with the attendees of the International Gentle Teaching Conference in Iceland via video conference.



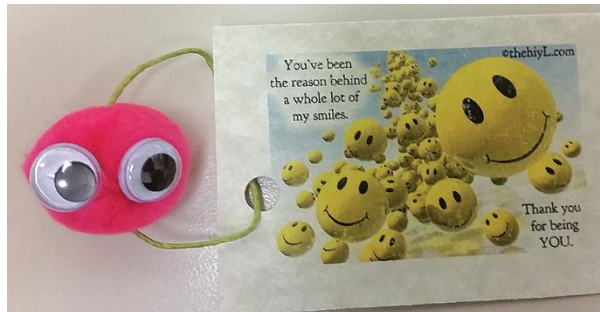
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CDD Program Coordinator Jody Michael will be receiving the award for *Advocate of the Year* on Tuesday night. Jody's support was key to the success of Steven's Warm Fuzzies project. "Jody set aside her duties...to help Steve figure out how to make his dream a reality," said Sarah Mudd, CDD's President and CEO. "The two of them put together gifts to hand out all over Kansas City. Jody drove Steve around to many places that included eitas, local TV news stations, Jackson County Sheriff's office, Kansas City Regional Office of the Missouri Department of Mental Health, and police stations. Jody has always been a champion for the people we support and sometimes it goes unrecognized because of its subtlety."

A member of the CDD team for 15 years, Jody remains modest when asked about the honor. "Working at CDD makes it easy for me to be an advocate. My grandpa always told me that it wasn't making a lot of money in life which defined who you are and he told me, 'Believe in what you do and the people you do it with.' CDD is that place for me."

Center for Developmentally Disabled (CDD) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that has served hundreds of Kansas Citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities since 1972. CDD provides housing, residential care, and day habilitation to over 180 individuals, 365 days a year. CDD believes that everyone has the ability to learn, grow, and make lifestyle choices. Its mission is to empower the people with disabilities to achieve their fullest potential.

Interviews available upon request. Contact Baylee DeLaurier at 816-531-0045 or [bayleed@cddkc.org](mailto:bayleed@cddkc.org).



Left: Steven and Jody

Above: Warm Fuzzies