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Contact: Joel L. Rubin, Executive Director
E-mail: jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org
Cell Phone: 847.707.0549

Naperville Youth Advocate Recognized as Emerging Leader of the Year

Naperville, IL— Every day the nation's 650,000 social workers act as advocates, champions, and leaders who make our society a better place to live. In continuation of this year's National Professional Social Work Month theme, "Social Workers: Leaders. Advocates. Champions," the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL) is honoring the work of some exceptional Illinois social workers and individuals whose work promotes social justice and social change with and on behalf of the people and clients they serve.

One such exemplary Illinois social worker being honored this year is Statewide Emerging Leader awardee Carolyn Wahlskog. **Carolyn Wahlskog** (MSW, University of Illinois at Chicago; LCSW) is senior program manager at 360 Youth Services' LGBTQ Transitional Housing Program for youth experiencing homelessness in Naperville. Carolyn co-chairs the DuPage Community Network: Professionals Serving LGBTQ Youth and coordinates Transformative Justice Law Project's monthly Name Change Mobilization. She previously worked with Youth Outlook's Transcend program. Carolyn centers young people, gender self-determination, and access to systems as she works with youth, families, and communities to find equitable and affirming care in schools, housing, healthcare, and the legal system.

In support of the nomination of Carolyn, supervisor Nancy Mullen of Youth Outlook writes: "Carolyn's efforts will have long term effect in several areas. First, she has been an unstoppable force in the suburban schools, advocating for trans students' rights and safety. Second, she is a sought after public speaker whom other professionals trust and can relate to. Third, she is a warm, nurturing, personal presence with the youth in her group and with their families. In some instances, trans youth are experiencing their first positive coming out exchange, and hearing pro-trans, healthy relationships/healthy sexuality messages for the first time. She has created safe, brave space for 7 years for hundreds of youth and thousands of other professionals. We will feel the ripple effect off of her work for the next two decades as those youth enter the workforce and relationships in different ways than they previously imagined possible."

The NASW-Illinois Chapter is proud of the work of Carolyn Wahlskog and others like her who fight every day for the underserved and underprivileged in Illinois. Carolyn is one of four individuals being honored this year. To learn more about the other statewide awardees, please visit the NASW-Illinois Chapter website (www.naswil.org) or contact Joel L. Rubin, executive director, at jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with over 120,000 members. The NASW-Illinois Chapter is one of the association's largest chapters with over 5,500 members in Illinois alone. NASW strives to advance social work careers, grow social work businesses, and protect the profession.