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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Idaho Children’s Mental Health Advocate Donates  
Award to Help Children with Mental Illnesses**

Long-time Idaho children’s mental health advocate Cynthia McCurdy, Rexburg, received the Barbara Thompson Gift award recently, which included a \$1,000 stipend. On Tuesday, Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>, McCurdy donated the award money to the Idaho Children’s Mental Health Council. McCurdy is the mother of a child with a Serious Emotional Disturbance and has dedicated her life to improving mental health care for children and their families.

“We all have a responsibility to ensure our children have the opportunity to live successful, productive lives,” McCurdy says. “I have a passion to help others and encourage parents who have a child with a mental illness to never give up, and to see the strengths in their child as they seek help.”

The Barbara Thompson Gift is an annual award presented to a deserving mother, child or a worthy cause in honor of Barbara Thompson, who was the 1995 National Mother of the Year. McCurdy, who was the 2006 Idaho Mother of the Year, serves as the parent representative on the Idaho Council on Children’s Mental Health and has served as the chair of the Region 7 Mental Health Council for three years. She travels throughout the state promoting children’s mental health, speaking four to five times a week to groups. McCurdy also has appeared before the Idaho Legislature, requesting their support for the Idaho System of Care for children’s mental health.

**(more)**

“We wish to thank Cynthia for her tireless efforts to improve mental health care for children and their families,” says State Senator Denton Darrington, who is the legislative representative to the council. “We have a lot of work ahead of us, but it is people like Cynthia who have helped us dramatically improve our System of Care for children’s mental health over the last five years.”

This is the first time the Barbara Thompson Gift was awarded to an Idaho recipient. The Idaho Children’s Mental Health Council will use the money to increase youth involvement in developing the Idaho System of Care, which strives to improve access and coordination of children’s mental health services. The goal of the System of Care is to increase the capacity for children with serious emotional disturbances and their families to live, work, learn and participate fully in their communities.

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**(Editors: For more information please contact Cynthia McCurdy at 208-356-4204.)**