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AUGUST IS CHILD SUPPORT AWARENESS MONTH IN NEW YORK STATE

Mayville: -- The State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) announced that Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has issued a Proclamation designating August as "Child Support Awareness Month," in New York State. Throughout August, OTDA will highlight the importance of the participation of both parents in a child's life.

"Parents have an obligation to support their children, emotionally and financially, throughout their lives," Governor Cuomo said in the Proclamation. "In difficult economic times, New York State's Child Support Enforcement Program continues to play a vital role in parents achieving and maintaining economic security for their children."

OTDA oversees the State's child support program and works closely with the local county departments of social services which help parents who are seeking assistance in obtaining financial and medical support for their children. In 2010, New York State collected more than \$1.7 billion in child support on behalf of custodial parents and their children.

The Chautauqua County Child Support office serves over 12,500 families. During 2010, collections made by this office recovered over \$2.8 million in Public Assistance and Medicaid benefits and passed on over \$12 million to custodial parents. The Chautauqua County Child Support Unit has also been actively participating, in partnership with other community service providers and the Family Court, in bringing the New York State Strengthening Families through Stronger Fathers Initiative; to local non-custodial parents. Chautauqua County is one of only a few counties in the state that provides this program. The program provides job search, job placement, parenting and nutritional education. The program has been in place since the fall of 2006 and has served over 350 individuals and resulted in nearly 200 of those individuals finding employment.

"In recognition of our County's Child Support Unit and our County's parents, who together have worked hard to provide children with a safe, loving, caring, and nurturing environment where they can grow, learn and excel, I have also issued a proclamation declaring August as 'Child Support Awareness Month,'" said County Executive Gregory J. Edwards.

"Child support plays an enormous role in the economic security of hundreds of thousands of New York's children and families," said OTDA Executive Deputy Commissioner Elizabeth

Berlin. "Studies have shown that when both parents provide financial and emotional support, children are less likely to engage in unhealthy and unproductive behaviors, and more likely to do well in school and succeed later in life."

Child support services are available to any parent, guardian, or caretaker of a child for whom child support is needed, regardless of income. Upon applying for child support services, local county child support operations will assist them in locating noncustodial parents; establishing legal paternity for children born to unmarried parents; obtaining a support order for financial support and medical insurance coverage for the child; collecting child support payments; and providing enforcement services when noncustodial parents fail to pay their child support.

Additional child support information is available at childsupport.ny.gov.

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