



National Council For Adoption

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Babineaux Award Honors Former Foster Care Youth

May 25, 2016 – Alexandria, VA – In recognition of their extraordinary achievements in overcoming obstacles and creating positive change in the lives of children in foster care who need permanent families, National Council For Adoption (NCFA) is proud to present the annual Warren and Mary Alice Babineaux Award to Sixto Cancel and Nicole Marchman.

The Babineaux Award honors powerful voices in the adoption community during May, National Foster Care Month, as NCFA seeks to raise awareness of the continuing needs of 108,000 U.S. children in foster care awaiting adoption. The public is invited to a free livestream on May 31st at 2:00pm EDT to help us honor our awardees and learn how to get involved.

Sixto Cancel is a foster care alumnus who has already made an extraordinary impact on the world at the young age of 24. Sixto founded [Think of Us](#), an organization united around the belief that “surviving is not enough.” All young people, despite adversity can become thriving adults. Think of Us provides advocacy, support, and creative services which bridge the gap between technology and child welfare to improve the well-being and development of youth and families engaged with local and state services. While this is Sixto’s latest project, it is by no means his first. While still in high school, he began Stellar Works which provided after school tutoring and transportation to youth who needed extra support because of their involvement with foster care. As a Young Fellow at the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Sixto supported the Success Beyond 18 campaign. He also was part of a large youth-led campaign for the [Siblings Bill](#) in Connecticut and other New England states. The bill passed, giving young people in foster care the right to visit their siblings. He also lead a grassroots campaign to break the pattern of giving youth a trash bag to put their belongings in when moving from home. Seeking to give youth a bit of dignity by providing duffel bags instead, he learned that Connecticut actually had a policy in place to provide duffels, but was not following it.

National Council For Adoption is proud to present Sixto Cancel with the Warren and Mary Alice Babineaux Award in recognition of his tenacious efforts to find creative ways to provide a network of support for youth currently and previously in foster care and for his work to prevent youth from aging out of foster care without a family.

Foster care alumna Nicole Marchman is a resilient survivor of traumas resulting from sexual and physical abuse, domestic violence, and the inherent instability of the foster care system. Determined not to let her past limit her future, Nicole found her voice and her courageous and inspiring message has helped to encourage and bring positive change to other trauma survivors. She now provides such support through None Lost Movement Ministry, an organization of abuse survivors she founded to ensure that victims no longer feel isolated and alone in the midst of their pain. NLMM offers education, awareness, and healing to children and young people ages 4 and up through conferences, counseling, and outreach services throughout the Tampa Bay area. Nicole tells her own story of overcoming in her book, *Unbreakable Spirit Arises: From Broken Girl to Resilient Woman*. She also served as a Foster Youth Intern with the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, which advocates for robust and effective national policies which impact foster youth, especially those which focus on kinship care and youth at risk of aging out of foster care. Nicole is also personally

engaged in the foster care system – now as a foster parent providing loving care to children in need. She is currently pursuing the adoption of children in her care so that she can provide the permanent, loving family she believes all children deserve.

National Council For Adoption is honored to present the Warren and Mary Alice Babineaux Award to Nicole Marchman in honor of her personal and professional service to children, foster families, adoptive families, and victims of violence and abuse.

NCFA president and CEO Chuck Johnson says: “Over my 30 years working in the adoption community, I’ve always been inspired by ordinary people who have dedicated their lives to making an extraordinary difference. It is my pleasure to recognize both Sixto’s and Nicole’s dedication to children in foster care by presenting them with the Babineaux Award this year. Thank you for all you’ve done and continue to do to create a brighter future for our nation’s children.”

To attend our complimentary “Fostering Hope” livestream on May 31st, visit AdoptionCouncil.org/Fostering-Hope. Sixto Cancel and Nicole Marchman will be officially presented with the Babineaux Award at NCFA’s *From Helping to Healing* Conference, which will take place September 22-24, 2016, in New Orleans, LA. Information on the conference is available at FromHelpingToHealing.org. Media interested in attending the award presentation ceremony should contact NCFA for free media passes.

About Foster Care

According to the most recent report from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are currently 415,129 children in U.S. foster care. Of these children, 107,918 are waiting to be adopted. In just the past two years, the number of children waiting for a family has increased by about 6% while the number of adoptions out of foster care has decreased by 4%. This is a national tragedy that must be addressed, as the outcomes for foster youth who age out of care are bleak. With no stable support system, these young adults are at high risk of homelessness, substance abuse, pregnancy, and incarceration. Approximately 22,000 youth age out every year and must navigate adulthood without the financial, educational, social, and psychological support they need to thrive. For information on how to get involved, visit AdoptionCouncil.org/Fostering-Hope.

About The Warren and Mary Alice Babineaux Award

The Warren and Mary Alice Babineaux Award honors individuals and organizations that have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure children experience the love and stability that come with a forever family. This award is given to those who have demonstrated the most selfless commitment to providing resources, education, and leadership to address the many challenges including parent recruitment, training, and support services necessary to give children safe, stable, and loving adoptive families. The Warren and Mary Alice Babineaux Award acknowledges the dedicated efforts of those who have generously given their time, talents, and resources to ensure that all children can “come home” to a loving, forever family. The award is named for Adoption Hall of Fame recipients Warren and Mary Alice Babineaux who cared for more than 100 children in foster care during their decades-long tenure as foster and adoptive parents in Louisiana.

The Babineaux Award was first presented in 2015 to Governor John Hickenlooper of Colorado and Governor John Kasich of Ohio in recognition of their commitments to generating increased awareness of and support for finding forever families for children in foster care.

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ABOUT NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION

Founded in 1980, National Council For Adoption (NCFA) is a global adoption advocacy nonprofit that promotes a culture of adoption through education, research, legislative action, and collaboration. As the authoritative voice for adoption, NCFA’s areas of focus include domestic infant adoption, adoption and permanency outcomes for youth in foster care, and intercountry adoption. Passionately committed to the belief that every child deserves to thrive in a nurturing, permanent family, NCFA serves children, birth parents, adopted individuals, adoptive families, and adoption professionals. In addition, we work tirelessly to educate U.S. and foreign government officials and policymakers, members of the media, and all those in the general public with an interest in adoption.

For more information, visit www.AdoptionCouncil.org.