



Family Connection of SC Announces 2026 Awards

(Columbia, SC June 9, 2026)—[Family Connection of SC](#) recently honored two individuals with state awards:

- Tyler Popillo, of Simpsonville, SC, received the Support Parent of The Year Award.
- Jennifer Rainville, Deputy Director of SC Applesed Justice, received the Pat Head Advocate of the Year Award.

Tyler is a busy mom of two who has been a Support Parent since 2021. Her journey with Family Connection began in 2019, when her now-nine-year-old son was diagnosed with autism. Support Parent Volunteers are trained to provide emotional support to families that have a child with a similar diagnosis and in doing so, offer hope in a way that only another parent who has lived a similar experience can do.

One of the families she supported shared this about Tyler:

“My Support Parent Tyler was a wealth of knowledge. She was so sweet and caring and answered all my questions. It was invaluable for me to have her to talk with, since I don't have anyone else who understands. Having Family Connection and our Support Parent made the world of difference.”

Jennifer is an advocate for children at the SC State House – testifying and providing input on legislation that impacts families. In 2026, she worked tirelessly to advocate for a student discipline bill that balanced safety needs of the school with due process rights of students. The bill was signed into law in May.

Jennifer leads the charge in raising awareness about students’ rights and advocating at the State House for access to a full and fair public education. She is also a new member of the Family Connection Policy Committee.

The awards were given as part of Family Connection’s 2026 LOOK!™ photography exhibit unveiling on Sunday, June 7 at 701 Whaley. The annual exhibit features 60 children and young adults with a disability or chronic health condition.

LOOK!™ is an annual photography exhibit showcasing the beauty and unique abilities of the children of families served by Family Connection. Professional photographers from across the state volunteer their time for photo sessions to capture the spirit of the children, young adults and their families. The photos feature active, candid moments of the participants doing the things they like to do best.

About Family Connection of South Carolina

Since 1990, Family Connection of South Carolina has been changing lives by making connections, raising awareness, and promoting inclusion for those with disabilities and chronic health conditions. We offer programs and services to ensure that parents, professionals, and caregivers have access to available resources to help their children reach their full potential. Our work focuses on five areas: parent support, healthcare,

education, training and advocacy. BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina is an ongoing sponsor of Family Connection of South Carolina. For more information or to make a referral or donation, visit www.familyconnectionsc.org or call 1-800-578-8750.



Jennifer Rainville and Amy Holbert



Tyler Popillo and Lisa Anderson



Tyler Popillo and Amy Holbert