



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jan. 25, 2016

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Children's Week to Honor South Florida Children's Advocate at Reception Tonight

Tallahassee, Fla. – Longtime Miami children's advocate Modesto "Mo" E. Abety will be presented with the state's top award for service on behalf of Florida's youth at a banquet tonight in Tallahassee as part of Children's Week festivities. Named in honor of former Governor and First Lady Lawton and Rhea Chiles' decades of commitment to public service benefiting Florida's children and their families, every year since 1999 Children's Week organizers present the Chiles Advocacy Award to a deserving Floridian who exemplifies integrity, dedication and commitment to improving the lives of Florida's children and their families and who has successfully engaged others to promote policies and programs benefiting them. This year, the 2016 Chiles Advocacy Award recipient is Abety, who will be presented with the award this evening at the Children's Week Awards Dinner and Reception at the University Center Club at Florida State University.

"I am honored, humbled and proud," said Abety. "I am honored because the award is named after two of the greatest and most compassionate public servants ever. I'm humbled by the fact that the selection committee is comprised of former recipients of the award, many of them dear friends and respected colleagues. And, I am so proud to have been nominated to receive the award by Kitty and Buddy Chiles. Thank you, all."

Throughout his more than 40 years of public service, Abety's work has been rooted in his firm belief that "all children are our children." He served as the director of the Miami-Dade County Children's Services Council for 12 years before founding The Children's Trust in Miami in 2002 where he served as CEO and president until 2013. He is proudest of his work at The Children's Trust which has invested close to \$1 billion in high-quality, research-based programs and services for children and families in Miami-Dade County.

Abety's previous roles include executive assistant to the director of the Metro-Dade Community Action Agency and Head Start Program; director of social services for Dade County's Public Housing Authority; special projects officer on community development, housing and homelessness for the United States Conference of Mayors; and community organizer and social worker with a variety of organizations and agencies serving the aged, the poor and distressed families. In addition, he has served on more than two dozen boards and committees advocating for children and family issues and has been involved in the development of important legislation for children's services such as Healthy Start, KidCare, early childhood and after-school services, universal pre-K and juvenile justice. In September 2011, Abety was appointed by President Obama to serve on the President's Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

"The tremendous commitment Mo has shown on behalf of Florida's children and families is a great representation of what Children's Week is all about – ensuring our youngest and most vulnerable citizens have access to the services they need to be successful and reach their full potential," said United Way of Florida President and Children's Week Chair Ted Granger.

For more information about Children's Week events this week, visit www.childrensweek.org.

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