

Swisstack honored for work in child advocacy

Rep. Tom Swisstack (D-Rio Rancho) was honored at New Mexico Voices for Children's 20th Anniversary Gala for his work to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children.

The Rio Rancho lawmaker received a Legislative Champion Award at the Nov. 9 gala in Albuquerque. He was honored for his work in the areas of child welfare, early intervention and alternatives to incarceration. His work as director of the Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention Center has made the program a national model.

"New Mexico has a dynamic community of child advocates working in a wide variety of fields and issues — from policy advocates, to direct service providers, public servants, and community organizations," said NM Voices' executive director Eric Griego. "We wanted to honor people from across the



PHOTO BY RAY A. MARES

Rep. Tom Swisstack (center) is flanked by New Mexico Voices for Children executive director Eric Griego (left) and board member Javier Gonzales as he accepts his Legislative Champion award.

spectrum for dedicating their lives to making New Mexico a better place in which to be a kid."

Besides honoring child advocates, NM Voices used

the gala to announce the New Mexico Children's Charter. The charter envisions a New Mexico 20 years hence in which children have the best possible opportunities to

succeed. A wall-sized version was on display at the gala and participants were invited to sign their names to it.

"Now comes the hard part — creating policies and setting

targets so we can begin to work toward these outcomes," Griego said. "We'll be calling upon our partners and allies for their input and support as we move forward."