WSPTA State Level Awards
2026 FRIEND OF CHILDREN RECIPIENT

Washington State PTA
everychild. onevoice.®

The WSPTA Friend of Children Award recognizes and honors an individual or organization for state-level dedication to all children through service aligned with WSPTA's vision and mission supporting the welfare, health, safety and/or education of Washington state's children and youth.

Congratulations to our 2026 recipient, Marie Sullivan!



Marie was awarded the Friend of Children award at the 2026 Legislative Assembly

Everyone in this room is a friend of the children — that's what brought you here. Today we're recognizing one of you in particular.

This person has spent more than thirty years in advocacy and strategic communications — private sector, public, nonprofit. She's seen it from every seat. In 2014 she started her own firm. And about ten years ago she walked into WSPTA's world, at a moment when — honestly — our reputation in Olympia had taken a few hits, and she helped us rebuild it, one relationship at a time.

She plays the long game. Not the news cycle — the long game, the kind of change that takes years. And she is patient enough, and stubborn enough, to see it through. Legislators seek her out. Her peers seek her out. I've sat in meetings and watched her quietly own the room — not by being the loudest voice, but by being the sharpest and most prepared one. (This quality can also be terrifying but in a good way; in a way that makes you very glad she is on your team.)

Here's one for the insiders. She has a *thing* about unfunded mandates. Do not tell Washington's schools to do something and then forget to pay for it. So last year, when Olympia was buzzing about new revenue and everyone was making big promises, she boiled it all down to four words.

*“*Show me the money.”

Unfunded mandate? Show me the money. Big promise, empty budget? Show me the money. It became a battle cry.

And when she's not holding the line for our kids, you might find her at a musical with her daughter, or somewhere sunny with a good water view — bonus points for the water view. Her work in Olympia is a family affair, too: some of you have toured our state capitol on Focus Day with her husband, Terry.

By now, a lot of you are smiling — because you *know*.

Our Friend of the Children — WSPTA's legislative consultant, and our force of nature in Olympia — is **Marie Sullivan**.

Marie — you are tough, and kind, and smart, and absolutely tireless, and there is no one I'd rather have at the table for Washington's kids.

Your battle cry deserves to be worn. This one's yours. "Show me the money."
(The presenter held up a t-shirt bearing the slogan)

Thank you for showing all of us how it's done. Congratulations!