

## 2024 Ohio CASA/GAL Association Celebrate Kids! Conference Speaker Bios

### **Natalie Adams, MSE, LSW, Senior Manager, Training, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**

Natalie's child welfare career spans more than 22 years, serving as a case manager, facilitator, trainer and program manager. She has worked at Fairfield and Franklin County Children Services, The Institute for Human Services, and most recently, as a Senior Manager of Training for the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Natalie's passion is grounded in the belief that children deserve to grow up in a safe, healthy and permanent family and she carries that value with her, applying it to every aspect of her work. Throughout her career, Natalie has trained 500+ new child welfare case managers, provided professional coaching for new child welfare supervisors, and served on several statewide committees to ensure continuous quality improvement in child welfare. As a Senior Manager of Training for the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Natalie provides training for new adoption recruiters and supervisors on the Foundation's evidence-based Child Focused Recruitment Model and develops ongoing continuing education on the importance of permanency for all youth in North America's foster care system. Natalie holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and a Master's of Education. She is a Licensed Social Worker in the State of Ohio.

### **Eileen P. Anderson, EdD, Anne Templeton Zimmerman, MD Professor of Bioethics; Director, Educational Programs in Bioethics and Medical Humanities; Director, Center for Medicine, Society and Culture, School of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University**

Dr. Eileen Anderson is the Anne Templeton Zimmerman, MD Professor of Bioethics at the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine where she directs the university's educational programs in Bioethics and Medical Humanities. An award-winning teacher, mentor, and researcher in the area of child and adolescent wellbeing, she is the founding director of the Center for Medicine, Society and Culture. A native Clevelander, Dr. Anderson earned her Doctoral and Master's degrees at Harvard University in Human Development, Psychology, and Anthropology after attending Brown University. She completed postdoctoral fellowships in Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, Development and Neuroscience at UCLA before joining the Department of Anthropology - and later Bioethics - at CWRU. She has spent the past two decades investigating how children and adolescents adapt to changes in their environments in ways that both advance and harm their health and is currently conducting research on child wellbeing in the U.S. guardian ad litem system. Dr. Anderson is widely published, regularly appears in the media, and has earned grants from NSF, NIH, the Office of Research Integrity at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Academy of Education, and the Spencer Foundation, among others.

### **Captain Shawn Bain (Ret.), Street Smart Ohio**

Shawn Bain began his career in law enforcement in 1985. Shawn has been assigned many different areas within law enforcement including the Jail Division, Patrol Division, Canine Unit, SWAT, and the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) conducting vice and narcotics investigations. Shawn has supervised in all these areas. He is a graduate of the F.B.I. National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Shawn is also a graduate of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Drug Unit Commanders Academy. He has attended numerous other schools and seminars across the country. Shawn has been assigned to numerous task forces assisting the FBI, DEA, and US Marshall's Office. Shawn is a member of the International Narcotics Interdiction Association (INIA), the Narcotic's Association Regional Coordinating Officers (NARCO), and the Ohio Task Force Commanders Association (OTFCA). He is a state certified instructor for the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy.

### **Denise Bothe, M.D., Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital**

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Denise Bothe, MD is double board certified in Pediatrics and Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics. She completed her medical degree at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse, New York, her Pediatrics residency at Albany Medical Center, and her Developmental Behavioral fellowship at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. She is an associate professor of pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University and has been faculty at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital for the past 16 years. In Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, Dr. Bothe specializes clinically and in teaching on diagnosing and managing issues in children who have had prenatal substance exposures with drugs and alcohol, adoption related issues, autism, ADHD, anxiety, learning disabilities, and more. She is co-director of Rainbow's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Clinic as part of the Rainbow Interdisciplinary Substance Exposure Program. She is also the Global Child Health Program Director for the Department of Pediatrics at Rainbow, which includes teaching on global child health topics, volunteer medical work, and helping run a course called The Special Needs of Children in Humanitarian Emergencies.

### **Brianna Britton, Director, CASA of Madison County**

Brianna has been involved with CASA in Ohio since 2019 when she began her career as a Volunteer Specialist with the Greene County CASA Program. While working and volunteering for Greene County's program, she developed skills to advance her career within CASA. In 2023, Brianna was promoted to Executive Director of CASA of Madison County, the newest CASA program within Ohio. With help from fellow program directors and Ohio CASA, Brianna is building CASA of Madison County from the ground up to ensure all children have a voice. Her experience, knowledge and education in Childhood Development has aided her in her child advocacy journey. She hopes to ensure every child who is alleged to be abused, neglected or dependent has a trusted person to speak for them during the court process while spreading CASA's mission around the state and nationwide.

### **Kristine Buffington, MSW, LISW-S, Trainer & Consultant, Buffington Consulting, LLC**

Kristine Buffington, MSW, LISW-S is a cum laude graduate in psychology from Eastern Michigan University. She earned her Master's Degree in Social Work from Western Michigan University and has 39 years of experience in the field of clinical social work. She is an affiliate member of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Her professional practice includes clinical therapy for trauma survivors, and advocacy, training and consultation in child traumatic stress and trauma-informed care.

### **Sarah Beal, PhD, Associate Professor and Scientific Director, CHECK Center, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center**

Sarah Beal, PhD, is a developmental psychologist and research faculty member at Cincinnati Children's. She completed graduate work at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln and the Center for Children, Families, and the Law, where she worked closely with the Nebraska Court Improvement Program. Her postdoctoral fellowship in pediatrics research was completed at Cincinnati Children's. She joined the CHECK Center in 2014. Her research interests, funded by local foundations and the National Institutes of Health, include addressing the transition to adulthood and what aspects of involvement in foster and kinship care contribute to altered health and developmental outcomes for young people in out-of-home care.

### **Carin Burr, MS, LPC, LICDC-CS, Professor of Social Services, Clark State College**

Carin Burr has been a Professor at Clark State College in Social Services since 2005. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Developmental Psychology and a Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling, holding licenses in both Mental Health and Addictions' Treatment Counseling. She was an active direct care provider for over 16 years and ran a private practice for eight of those years, serving mostly co-

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occurring disorder clients. Carin has developed a new Associate of Applied Science in Addictions and Recovery Services, and a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree in Addictions and Integrated Treatment Services. She has been an advocate of Families of Addicts for several years and often speaks to various recovery topics at meetings.

### **Joshua Counciller**, *Manager of Operations, Ohio Commission on Fatherhood of the Ohio Department of Children and Youth*

Joshua Counciller is the Manager of Operations for the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF) with the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. During his seventeen years of county and state public service, he worked in case management, policy, operations management, and fiscal management. His passion and heart for fatherhood, both personally and professionally, drives him to further the mission of OCF to help fathers be the best parents, partners, and providers. To help empower Fatherhood Practitioners and fathers, Josh primarily focuses on all operational aspects for OCF. He earned a B.S. in Psychology, Biology, and Human Development & Family Studies, as well as a Master of Business Administration. Josh and his beautiful wife of nineteen years have two children together, ages twelve and nine years old.

### **Todd R. Curtis**, *Master Criminal Investigator and Profiler; Retired Senior Investigator, Wood County Prosecutor's Office; Retired Detective Sergeant, Perrysburg Township Police Department*

Todd is a 30-year law enforcement veteran with over twenty years of experience as a criminal investigator. A former K-9 handler and special response team member, Todd also has over 20 years of experience as a law enforcement trainer and educator. Todd is a court certified expert in Domestic Violence and strangulation assault, a certified OPOTA Instructor, Master Criminal Investigator, and a Criminal Profiler. Todd has extensive research and experience in investigating the mindset and behaviors of the abuser and their victims. He was instrumental in advocating for the passage of Ohio's felony strangulation law.

### **Lisa DeGeeter, JD**, *Director of Systems Advocacy and Policy Counsel, Ohio Domestic Violence Network*

Lisa DeGeeter obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree magna cum laude from Loyola University Chicago, and her J.D. cum laude from the University of Illinois College of Law. Prior to attending law school, Lisa worked on sexual and severe physical abuse cases as an advocate at a rape crisis program and a case manager at a children's advocacy center in suburban Chicago. After law school, Lisa was the assistant director of the Ohio Task Force on Family Law and Children, addressing parenting time issues. Lisa briefly worked on children's health policy for the Children's Defense Fund and served for more than 13 years as the founding executive director a child advocacy and rape crisis program. Lisa served as the domestic violence subject matter expert for the CSEA Parenting Time Opportunities for Children federal demonstration grant and in 2016 she was awarded the Model of Justice Advocate of the Year by the Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center. Lisa has served on her local Visitation Center Advisory Committee, Big Brothers Big Sister board, Pickerington LSD Community School Governing board and as the president of the Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers board. She has been a trainer with the Supreme Court's Guardian ad Litem Training program for more than 17 years, and currently manages the Linking Systems of Care for Ohio Youth project.

### **Kimberly Dent**, *Executive Director, Ohio Commission on Fatherhood of the Ohio Department of Children and Youth*

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Executive Director Kimberly A. Dent of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF) brings over 24 years of government experience serving fathers, children, and families in Ohio. OCF funds Fatherhood programs throughout Ohio, makes policy recommendations, trains professionals, and engages the community regarding the vital role fathers play in their children's lives. She served in various capacities in local and state child support programs, such as a child support caseworker, a program consultant, a business analyst and a human services program administrator in county services, policy, as well as outreach, education and grants management. Ms. Dent also served as a commissioner for OCF. Ms. Dent holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master's Degree in Public Policy and Administration from Ohio University. She is working on her Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration, Specializing in Law (all but Dissertation).

### **Vicki Deisner, Esq.,** *State Government Affairs Advisor, Animal Welfare Institute*

Vicki is the Executive Director of Ohio Animal Advocates (OAA), a statewide nonprofit that strives to make Ohio a place where all animals are protected from cruelty, abuse, and neglect. Vicki also represents Animal Welfare Institute's (AWI) Government Affairs in the state of Ohio and successfully passed House Bill 33 in the last legislative session that requires social workers, counselors and veterinarians report animal abuse and law enforcement, animal control officers and dog wardens report child maltreatment. Previously, Vicki served as the Midwest Legislative Director for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky. Vicki also served as the Associate Director of National Water Resources Campaigns for the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) in Washington, D.C., Executive Director of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) in Columbus, Ohio, and Ohio Assistant Attorney General in the Environmental Enforcement Section. Vicki obtained her undergraduate degree in Zoology from The Ohio State University, her graduate degree in Physiology from the University of Cincinnati, Medical College, her clinical degree in Respiratory Therapy for the University of Chicago, and her law degree from Northern Kentucky University, Salmon P. Chase Law School.

### **Emily Dunlap, JD, TRCC,** *Senior Staff Attorney, Advocating Opportunity*

Emily Dunlap provides direct legal services and advocacy to trafficked and exploited persons. She represents clients in a variety of legal matters including immigration, criminal defense, domestic relations, and civil proceedings. She also provides technical consultation on anti-trafficking best-practices, policy, court programming, and legislation. Emily received her J.D. from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law in 2014. She graduated from Ohio University in 2010, receiving her undergraduate degrees in Sociology and Women & Gender Studies. Prior to joining Advocating Opportunity, Emily was The OSU Moritz College of Law's Greif Fellow in Juvenile Human Trafficking, representing exploited and trafficked children in a wide variety of legal proceedings.

### **Quinn Dybdahl, Esq.,** *Senior Staff Attorney, Program, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption*

Quinn Dybdahl, Esq., is the Senior Staff Attorney, Program at the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. She oversees the contracting procedures that support over 500 WWK (Wendy's Wonderful Kids) recruiters across North America and provides counsel on legal issues that arise in implementing the WWK program. Her close work with the WWK program provides insight into legal barriers that prevent youth from achieving permanency, which Quinn translates to legal audiences nationwide through trainings and resources. Quinn has dedicated her career to serving vulnerable youth. She graduated from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law with a Certificate in Children Studies. While in law school, she represented youth in delinquency and immigration matters through the Justice for Children

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Legal Clinic and held leadership positions in public interest and child welfare organizations. Quinn has gained diverse insight into adoption and foster care issues through legal internships with a local court, child welfare agency, and law firm.

### **Gaelin Elmore**, *Belonging Champion, Keynote Speaker, Thought Leader, ATTACH Board Member*

Gaelin Elmore is a dynamic and nationally sought-after keynote speaker, trainer, and thought leader. He works with organizations and people to become belonging-informed in order to help children overcome trauma and unleash their potential. Gaelin's passion and energy for his work stems from his heart for justice and his own lived experience. His own belonging journey has led Gaelin to the National Football League, and now stages, board rooms, and organizations across the country, aiming to inspire, encourage, and equip others to think differently about their work and its long-term impact on others. Gaelin now lives in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, where he gets to experience the purest form of belonging as a husband to his wife, Micaela, and dad to their two daughters, Laniah and Tatum.

### **Kevin Everhart**, *Retired Narcotic Detective, Area Manager, Averhealth*

Kevin Everhart is the Area Manager for Central and Southern Ohio, American Court and Drug Testing Services (Averhealth) and a retired Narcotics Detective of over 25 years. Mr. Everhart has gained a vast knowledge of street drugs and trends while working undercover, and later as the Assistant Task Force Commander of a Major Crimes Task Force. He's spent the past 15 years in management for treatment providers and is a Certified Breath Alcohol Instrument Instructor and a Certified Instructor for Federal DOT Urine Collections. Mr. Everhart has testified as an Expert Witness in numerous Child Protective Services, Probation, and Drug Court cases along with Domestic Relation cases on the interpretation of drug test results throughout the state of Ohio. He carries a vast knowledge in the field of narcotics, drug testing, and laboratory results interpretation.

### **Alexandra Gilbert, MSW, LISW-S**, *Alexandra Gilbert LISW LLC, Northwoods Clinic*

Alexandra Gilbert is a Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) who specializes in working with children, adults, and families. She started her career at Ohio CASA where she focused on working with the Youth Advisory Board. She then completed a Master's Degree in Social Work from The Ohio State University, focused on Child Welfare. She spent seven years as an Outpatient Therapist at Nationwide Children's Hospital, focusing on neurodevelopmental disorders, trauma, and family therapy. She transitioned into private practice, continuing with the same specialties.

### **Timothy W. Green**, *Program Director, Voices for Children Lorain County CASA, Lorain County Domestic Relations Court*

Tim was born in Elyria, Ohio and graduated from Hillsdale College with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology in 1988. He began working for the Lorain County Domestic Relations Court in 1990 as a Specialized Program Manager working with juvenile youth on Intensive Probation. In 1992 he became a Juvenile Probation Officer, and in 1995 he became a Deputy Director of the Day Treatment Program. Tim worked with High-Risk Felony Offender Probationary Youth in a Community Program overseeing various staff members. In September of 2000, he began working for the Voices for Children Lorain County CASA Program, becoming the program's second director. He has served in this role for 24 years. Tim, along with his two staff, recruit, train and support over 170 CASA/GAL volunteers in their roles to advocate for neglected and dependent children who come into the court system of no fault of their own. Tim says, "To work with selfless, committed, and caring adults who want to make a difference in the lives on children in need means the world to me!"

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### **Mary Greiner, MD, MS, Professor and Medical Director, CHECK Center, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center**

Mary Greiner, MD, MS, is a child abuse pediatrician and clinical faculty at Cincinnati Children's. She completed medical school at Virginia Commonwealth University's Medical College of Virginia, residency at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, and child abuse fellowship at Cincinnati Children's. She established the Comprehensive Health Evaluations for Cincinnati's Kids (CHECK) Center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital in 2012, which serves children in out-of-home care in southwest Ohio. She also evaluates innovative approaches to delivering healthcare for children in or at risk of entering foster care, and identifying which clinical interventions most help to improve health outcomes for these children.

### **Elaine Hamilton, Information Specialist/Trainer, The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities**

Elaine and her husband Reginald have two children, a son Donovan, and a daughter Maliyah, who was diagnosed with autism at three years of age. Elaine is a Trainer and Information Specialist for The Ohio Coalition for The Education of Children with Disabilities, the Parent Training and Information Center for the State of Ohio. She has worked with families in over 24 counties, now serving Franklin, Fairfield, Madison, Pickaway and Clark counties. She provides information to assist with understanding the special education and the evaluation process and explains parents' rights, educational programs, services and support to parents/guardians of students with special needs. Elaine previously worked in Columbus City Schools as a Parent Mentor before joining OCECD. Elaine works with families that have children from Pre-School through transitioning into adulthood and works with various community agencies to discuss multiple topics surrounding children with disabilities. She is a trainer and presenter for Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University in the area of Family Centered Care and Autism. Elaine is a children's book author with a children's book series on Autism and ADHD. Elaine's passion for community engagement goes beyond public speaking. Elaine has coordinated and hosted a free fresh produce market in conjunction with the Mid-Ohio Food Bank for the past eight years, which has provided free produce to thousands of families in the Central Ohio area.

### **Judge Shelly R. Harsha, Pickaway County Juvenile Court**

Judge Shelly R. Harsha was elected Pickaway County Juvenile/Probate Judge, with a term commencing February 9, 2021. She received a B.A. from Bowling Green State University in 1983, and completed a J.D. at the University of Toledo, College of Law in 1986. Before taking the bench, Judge Harsha had a breadth of experience, including clerking with the Fourth District Court of Appeals, being trial counsel with the Ohio State Public Defender Office, serving as an Assistant Pickaway County Prosecutor, and maintaining a private practice.

### **Sarah Harvan, MA BA, Training Coordinator, CASA/GAL Program of Summit County**

Sarah Harvan is a graduate of the University of Akron with a Bachelor and Master of Arts Degrees in Family and Child Development. Upon graduation she began teaching courses in Family and Child Development as an adjunct professor at The University of Akron. She began volunteering with the CASA/GAL Program of Summit County in 2010 and has been volunteering with Child Advocates of Cuyahoga County since 2016. Currently, Ms. Harvan is the Training Coordinator for the Summit County CASA program. She is a graduate of the Child and Family Leadership Exchange program and recently assisted in writing a juvenile law textbook.

**Betsy Hauck**, *Court Involved Youth Coordinator, Ohio Department of Education and Workforce*

Betsy has worked with the Vulnerable Youth Programs team at the Ohio Department of Education since March of 2022. Prior to that, she spent over 16 years working with youth at a maximum-security treatment facility. While there, she worked within a multi-year trauma and grief component therapy for children and adolescents learning collaborative that revolutionized treatment and outcomes in her facility for both the youth and staff. As the Court Involved Youth Coordinator for the Department, she provides information on federal laws that support the educational stability for students who are justice-involved and students in foster care. She graduated from The Ohio State University.

**Kimberly A. Helfrich, Esq.**, *Director, Guardian ad Litem Division, Hamilton County Office of the Public Defender*

Kim graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a Bachelor of Science in the field of Criminal Justice. She worked at the Department of Pretrial Services for Hamilton County Municipal Court for two years before attending law school. In 1997, Kim graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Law and was admitted to the practice of law that same year. The following year Kim accepted a position as a Guardian ad Litem in the Hamilton County Public Defender's Office, Guardian ad Litem Division. In 2001, Kim became the Assistant Director of the Guardian ad Litem Division and assumed the role of Director of the Division in 2005. Currently, Kim supervises a staff of 16 attorney guardians ad litem, 12 non-attorney guardians ad litem, four administrative staff and one investigator. Kim is also a member of the faculty of the Ohio Supreme Court Judicial College, Guardian ad Litem Education Program.

**Judge David Hejmanowski**, *Delaware County Juvenile Court*

David A. Hejmanowski has served as the Judge of the Probate/Juvenile Division of the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas since February of 2015 and was previously a Magistrate at that Court from January of 2003 to February of 2015 and Juvenile Court Administrator from 2004 to 2015. Prior to this, he served as an assistant prosecuting attorney for Delaware County. He graduated as a Public Service Fellow from the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law in 1999 where he also received the Joseph M. Harter Memorial Award for Trial Advocacy. He received his B.S. in political science from Hiram College in 1996. Currently a member of the board of the Supreme Court's Judicial College, he is also a past chair of the Supreme Court's Advisory Committee on Language Services, a past chair of the Ohio State Bar Association Juvenile Justice Committee and current chair of the Ohio State Bar Association's Content Advisory Committee. From 2008 to 2011, he served a three-year term on the Ohio State Bar Association Board of Governors. During 2023, he served as President of the Ohio State Bar Foundation, and he is currently President of the Delaware County Bar Foundation. In 2020 he began a ten-year term as an officer of the Ohio Judicial Conference. He is a member of the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice. From 2019 to 2022 he served on the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice, which advises Congress and the White House on juvenile justice policy matters. He is a member of the Boards of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee of the National Center for Juvenile Justice. He is a frequent presenter for the Ohio Judicial College and the Ohio State Bar Association. Locally, he has served as President of the Delaware County Historical Society and on the boards of the Central Ohio Symphony, the Strand Cultural Arts Society, the Andrews House and the Arena Fair Theater Company.

**Jessica Johnson LPCC, LICDC, Director, Behavioral Health and Wellness, CareSource**

Jessica Johnson is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Licensed Independent Chemical Dependency Counselor. Jessica is the Director of Behavioral Health and Wellness for the Complex Health Solutions team at CareSource where she drives the behavioral health strategy for the company and collaborates with provider and healthcare systems across markets to ensure the structure of the behavioral health ecosystem is accessible and adequate for members in need of care. Jessica's Substance Use Disorder experience stems from multiple levels of care in SUD treatment in an array of settings in Ohio, including clinical therapy, quick response team models, recovery housing, peer support, criminal justice interventions and harm reduction.

**Sarah Levels, MSW, Bridges Policy Developer, Ohio Department of Children and Youth (ODCY)**

Sarah Levels, MSW has been working in child welfare for over 23 years. She currently serves as a Policy Developer for the Ohio Department of Children and Youth as part of the team that oversees Bridges, Ohio's extended foster care program that offers case management and other supports to young adults who aged out of foster care. Previously, Ms. Levels served as an Independent Living Supervisor at Franklin County Children Services.

**Magistrate Brandin Marlow, Clark County Juvenile Court**

Magistrate Marlow was appointed to serve in the Clark County Juvenile Court in April 2013. For the last six years, she has been assigned to the abuse, neglect and dependency docket. Prior to serving the court, Magistrate Marlow served as a guardian ad litem and represented parents in all type of custody matters, including AND cases, for a decade. Between the two, she served as a civil prosecutor in the Clark County Prosecutor's Office.

**Adrian M. McLemore, Speaker, Trainer, & Forever Teenager**

Adrian McLemore has an intimate and deep understanding of the child welfare system. At just six years old, Adrian found himself in a foster home. For the next 12 years, he lived in three states, bouncing between his parents and the system, eventually aging out of foster care. Then at 21, he responded to a call to become a kinship caregiver for his niece and nephew, who were both toddlers at the time. From these experiences, Adrian has become a champion for ensuring young people are part of the foster care conversation. He has taken what is inherently personal for him and made it his life's work. Adrian's life work and mission is to share the knowledge that everyone is a kinship care provider, and we all have a role to play in achieving better outcomes for youth and families.

**Kathy McPherson, National Consultant and Facilitator, Aha! Process**

Kathy J. McPherson from Columbus, Ohio has worked in the field of Social Work for over 30 years as a Substance Abuse and Intervention Counselor, Trauma Counselor, Court Liaison, Case Manager, and Domestic Violence Counselor/Facilitator. Kathy began working with Aha! Process in the Franklin County Common Pleas Drug Court Program facilitating the "Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' by World" workgroup. She became a National Consultant and Facilitator of several sectors of the Aha! Process work for the past 15 years. Kathy is also the senior Community Health Worker at Heart of Ohio Family Health Clinic.

**Shana Merrick MSW, LSW, CDCA, Behavioral Health Specialist, CareSource**

Shana Merrick is a subject matter expert, Behavioral Health Specialist with CareSource. Ms. Merrick has 30+ years of working with individuals, families and community partners/organizations in meeting social



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service needs and addressing social justice issues. The last seven years have been focused predominately in the area of addiction. Ms. Merrick had the opportunity to be part of the initial pioneering efforts and partnerships of the Colerain Township first responders in the implementation of the Quick Response Team, now a national model of deflection. She also had the opportunity to implement several innovative harm reduction programs and services within Hamilton County as part of multi-million dollar CDC grant within public health while serving as the Project Manager.

### **Brice Mickey**, *Vice President of DEI, Beech Acres Parenting Center*

Brice is the Vice President of DEI at Beech Acres Parenting Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. Beech Acres' mission is to combine science and compassion to deliver innovative solutions that equip adults to meet children's needs and cultivate their strengths. Brice got his start in the sector at the University of Cincinnati where he participated and later directed their Racial Awareness Program. He has since gone on to consult with over 100 organizations.

### **Jennifer Miller**, *Cross-Systems Collaboration Manager, Bureau of Child and Young Adult Supports, Office of Children and Youth*

Jennifer Miller has worked in the child protective services space since 2000 in various positions from caseworker, support staff and supervisor. Her experience encompasses work in both a large metro and a small/medium public children services agency before coming to ODJFS in 2015. In 2015, she became a member of the Ohio SACWIS help desk team. Prior to the transition to DCY, Jennifer moved to the newly created Children Services Training and Development team in 2021. As a member of the team, Jennifer developed, produced and conducted trainings with-county PCSA stakeholders and assisted with the implementation of the Child and Adult Protective Services Learning Management System. In May 2024, Jennifer transitioned to the Bureau of Child and Young Adult Supports as the Cross-Systems Collaboration Manager. Jennifer graduated from The Ohio State University.

### **Najma Mohamoud**, *Multicultural Information Specialist/Trainer, The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities*

Najma Mohamoud is the Multicultural Information Specialist/Trainer, Somali and African Communities, Central Ohio. Najma joined OCECD in April 2017 as an Information Specialist, working with the Somalin community in Franklin County. Najma has a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Memphis and has been working with the Somalin community in Ohio since 2015.

### **JJ Peck**, *Peer Support Program Coordinator, Clark State College*

JJ Peck has held the position of Peer Recovery Support Coordinator at Clark State College for two years. Before this, he was a Peer Support Specialist for McKinley Hall, a private nonprofit substance abuse treatment center in Clark County. His career with McKinley Hall spanned seven years and he served in a variety of positions. As Peer Support Specialist, JJ participated on the Overdose Quick Response Team. JJ is a member of the Springfield Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Supports Coalition, and Springfield Grow Blitz Team providing recovery outreach and resources to the community.

### **Vanessa Perkins**, *Workforce Development Director, Freedom A La Carte*

Vanessa Perkins is the Workforce Development Director at Freedom A La Carte and has previous experience working as a criminal justice professional for a local county court and the county prosecutor's

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office. Ms. Perkins is an anti-trafficking subject matter expert who uses her knowledge, experience, and professional expertise to educate professionals and general audiences across the state. She also serves as a grant project constituent for the Ohio Department of Public Safety Office of Criminal Justice Services.

### **Sgt. Michael N. Powell (Ret.),** *Street Smart Ohio*

Sgt. Mike Powell began working with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office in Columbus, Ohio in December of 1973 and retired in March 2006 after 36 years. For the last 20 years of his tenure, he was assigned to the Special Investigations Unit (S.I.U.) working narcotics, vice and stolen property investigations. Mike is a graduate of the F.B.I. National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. From June 1995 through December 2001, he was federally deputized and was a supervisor with the F.B.I. Drug Task Force in Columbus. Mike has lectured quite extensively on narcotics, both locally and nationally. He is a member of the Narcotics Association Regional Coordinating Officers (NARCO) as well as a state certified instructor of narcotics teaching at police academies throughout Ohio. He also drafted and is the lead instructor in basic and advanced undercover narcotics courses offered across the state since 1984.

### **Jesse Reed,** *Director, Life Services Ohio, CareSource*

Jesse Reed is the Director for the Life Services program with CareSource, overseeing the department's Ohio market. He came to CareSource in early 2015 when the Life Services pilot launched and has been an integral part of the team as it has developed and evolved. Prior to joining CareSource, Jesse spent 10+ years working with individuals with disabilities. This included many roles with both children and adults, including residential care, running a summer respite camp, case management and behavior support. Jesse has a BA in Psychology from Miami University. He is a certified Life Coach through the International Coach Federation and is a certified Six Sigma Lean Black Belt in Healthcare. He has also been recognized as a "Master Board Member" with the Ohio School Board Association. Jesse lives in Germantown, Ohio where he was born and raised, with his wife and three children. In his free time, he enjoys reading, running, traveling and coaching his children's various sports teams.

### **Tara Roberson,** *Senior Manager, Training, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption*

Tara Roberson has over 15 years of experience in child welfare. She has worked in two different states in a variety of roles learning the ins and outs of the child welfare system. Tara has worked in family preservation, ongoing child welfare, extended foster care and transition-aged youth services. Tara began her work at DTFA as an Adoption Program Manager where she was charged with the training and coaching of the child-focused recruitment model, helped recruiters overcome systemic barriers to permanency, and monitored fidelity to the CFR model. Tara assisted in the expansion of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program in Ohio and assisted in increasing the number of recruiters in the state. She transitioned to the training team one year ago and is currently a Senior Manager of Training at DTFA. Tara graduated from the Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology.

### **Sarah Shooter, BA,** *Independent Living and Transition Aged Youth Policy Developer, Ohio Department of Children and Youth (ODCY)*

Sarah Shooter, BA began working in child welfare 14 years ago as an Independent Living Coordinator at Guernsey County Children Services. Ms. Shooter also served as a Regional Coordinator for Bridges in the Southeast region of Ohio for nearly five years. In 2022, Sarah became a Policy Developer for Independent Living and Transition Aged Youth at the Ohio Department of Children and Youth.

**Honorable Patricia J. Smith, *Portage County, Ohio Juvenile/Probate Court***

Judge Smith grew up near Buffalo, New York and graduated from the University of New York at Buffalo with a BA in political science. In 1987, she married her high school sweetheart and they moved to Cleveland, Ohio where she attended Cleveland Marshall College of Law. Upon graduation in 1992, Judge Smith started her legal career with the Cuyahoga County Public Defender's Office. In 1996, she left the PD's office to begin a private practice focused primarily on criminal, juvenile and appellate law. In 1998, Judge Smith and her husband moved to Portage County to raise their two children and in 2007, she started a law practice. Judge Smith was an active member of the Portage County Bar, and assumed many roles, including part-time temporary magistrate in Juvenile Court, acting judge for all three Municipal Court judges, volunteer attorney in both the Good Deeds program for Probate Court and the Bar Association Foreclosure Program, Guardian ad Litem in Juvenile Court, and public guardian in Probate Court. Judge Smith currently resides in Hiram, Ohio. She was elected Portage County Juvenile/Probate Judge in November of 2020 and began her term in February of 2021. Since taking the bench, Judge Smith has started both a CASA program and a court case management program in Juvenile Court. The Juvenile Court was recently selected by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges as one of eleven implementation sites in the country to improve its handling of dependency, neglect and abuse cases. She has implemented technology for the efficiency of both Courts. In the Probate Court, Judge Smith spearheaded the implementation of a Guardianship Services Board in collaboration with the Board of Mental Health and the Board of Developmental Disabilities to provide for the public wards of Portage County. This program now partners with Portage County Job and Family Services along with several other community stakeholders to expand its services. The Probate Court has also begun an Assisted Outpatient Docket to better serve citizens of Portage County suffering from severe mental illness.

**Cheryl Stahl, *LPCC-S, Substance Use/Mental Health Program Director, Ohio Domestic Violence Network***

Cheryl graduated from Kent State University with a Master of Education and became a licensed counselor in 2005. Cheryl devoted her clinical career to working with the substance using and dependent population and worked in outpatient treatment for 12 years and as the Program Manager for the Portage Area Recovery Center, a 23-bed women's residential recovery housing facility for 6 years. Cheryl is now the Substance Use/Mental Health Program Director for the Ohio Domestic Violence Network and provides training and technical assistance to domestic violence programs throughout the state on how to best serve survivors who have mental health and substance use issues.

**Deputy Laura Stahr, *Deputy Sheriff, Franklin County Sheriff's Office***

Deputy Laura Stahr began her career with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office in May of 2000. After serving five years in the Corrections Division working at the Franklin County Correction Center II on Jackson Pike, she transferred to the Community Relations Division. While her primary duties involve teaching the D.A.R.E. program to fifth grade students in various elementary schools within Franklin County, she also provides safety talks on a variety of topics to all age groups. In 2008, she was one of four deputies who helped establish the Rape Aggression Defense Systems at the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. R.A.D. Systems is an international program that includes the Basic Defense Systems program which is a women's only self-defense program. R.A.D. Systems provides a holistic approach to self-defense education, supporting the necessity of continuous learning in order to provide realistic options for each population as they go through life. The R.A.D. Mission Statement is to develop and enhance the options of self-defense, so they may become viable considerations to the woman who is attacked.

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Deputy Stahr is very passionate in her desire to help the citizens of Franklin County learn all possible ways they can protect themselves so they can avoid becoming a victim of any type of crime.

### **Leah Stone, MSW, LISW-S, RA, *Training and Technical Assistance Manager, Ohio Domestic Violence Network***

Leah Stone (she/her) serves as the Training and Technical Assistance Manager at the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, where she has worked since 2021. Leah facilitates, organizes, and presents trainings to advocates and allied professionals across Ohio on a wide array of topics related to domestic violence advocacy. Drawing from nearly a decade of experience in the field and the wisdom gained from survivors, Leah has expertise in trauma-informed care, shelter advocacy, crisis hotline, community outreach and collaboration, support group facilitation, and trauma-focused psychotherapy. She is a trained Eye Movement De-sensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapist and recently opened a part-time private practice. As a licensed Social Worker in Ohio, Leah brings an understanding of the complexities surrounding victim advocacy and social work to her trainings. She approaches her work through an anti-oppression lens, recognizing the intersecting systems of power and privilege that impact survivors' experiences. She lives in Dayton, the birthplace of flight, with her partner of 12 years and two dogs.

### **Rachel Tangen, Ph.D., *Pediatric Neuropsychologist, University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital***

Rachel Tangen, PhD is a board-certified pediatric neuropsychologist at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital and an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Tangen completed her doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of Houston in Houston, TX and completed a fellowship in clinical neuropsychology at the Children's Hospital in New Orleans, LA. She is the Co-founder and Co-director of the Rise-Developmental Pediatric Fetal Alcohol Spectrum & Substance Exposure Program at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital. Her specialization is in assessing cognitive and neuropsychological effects of prenatal alcohol and drug exposure in children.

### **Magistrate Nicole L. Thornton, *Lorain County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court***

Nicole L. Thornton is a staff Magistrate for the Honorable Lisa I. Swenski, Lorain County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court, and handles the abuse, neglect and dependency docket. Magistrate Thornton's past experience includes staff attorney for Delaware County Department of Job and Family Services, staff attorney for CASA of Franklin County, and Assistant Coordinator of the CASA Programs of Delaware and Union Counties. Magistrate Thornton was a volunteer CASA/GAL for Richland County (SC) CASA while she attended law school at the University of South Carolina.

### **Magistrate Eric Wahl, Esq., *Franklin County Domestic Relations Court***

Eric became a Magistrate in Franklin County Domestic Relations Court in 2017, where he hears pre-decree divorce matters, and post-decree divorce issues involving custody, child support, and spousal support. Magistrate Wahl graduated from Bowling Green State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in 1997, and from Capital University Law School where he earned his Juris Doctor in 2001. He was admitted to the Ohio Bar that same year, and the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio in 2006. Magistrate Wahl began his practice as an associate at Robert A. Bracco and Associates, where he handled a variety of cases including civil and business litigation, criminal

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matters, and domestic relations and juvenile cases. In 2011, he became a sole practitioner handling primarily divorce and private custody cases, as well as abuse, neglect and dependency matters. Throughout his time as an attorney, Magistrate Wahl dedicated most of his practice to serving as a Guardian ad Litem in divorce and custody matters, as well as abuse, neglect and dependency cases. Magistrate Wahl is also a member of the faculty of the Ohio Supreme Court Judicial College, Guardian ad Litem Education Program.

**Micayla Wilson, BSW, Grant Coordinator, Ohio Department of Public Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Services, Anti-Human Trafficking Department**

Micayla Wilson, BSW, has worked in the anti-human trafficking field for the past seven years, with most of that time spent in direct service with teenage survivors and their families through residential care and community-based services. During these years of direct service, she quickly learned the challenges, beauty, complexities and nuances that are prevalent in directly serving teens who have been exploited. She became passionate about serving vulnerable youth with best practices by incorporating an interdisciplinary team approach to overcome systemic barriers that cyclically retraumatize and re-exploit survivors, particularly those involved with child welfare agencies and juvenile justice systems. She believes in the equipping of social service providers with tools and resources to develop sustainable models to consistently serve survivors with dignity, compassion, and trauma informed care. Micayla is now serving in the state Anti-Human Trafficking department in the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Services. She works as a Grant Coordinator assisting in the development and oversight of programs around the state to improve outcomes for minor survivors through bolstering both the child welfare and juvenile justice responses to youth survivors.