

Todd Kutzera has been an adoption worker for over 20 years and has been with Summit County Children Services since 1996. Over the past 12 years, Todd has finalized 129 adoptions and has several more that should finalize by the end of this year. Todd is simply one of the best caseworkers she has ever known. He is very passionate about adoption and works diligently to ensure permanency for the kids on his caseload as quickly as possible.

Submitted by Tracy Mayfield, Director of Protective Specialized Services,
Summit County Children Services

Beth Kollar is a long-time Adoption Caseworker at Mahoning County Children Services. She works very hard to ensure EVERY child on her caseload has permanency regardless of their circumstances. Beth treats each family with respect and makes their adoption experience extremely easy and wonderful for both the family and children. She always makes sure all the children in the family receive an adoption gift at the adoption finalization, so everyone in the family feels special! She has been able to find permanency for some of the most complex children placed in the Agency's permanent custody. Beth has finalized several adoptions of children who have been adjudicated delinquent and secured permanency for sibling groups and/or with extensive medical issues.

She works very hard with children on her caseload who the Agency has not been able to achieve permanency for or children who will emancipate from the child welfare system to ensure they graduate from high school. There is one memorable case when Beth worked with a delinquent teenager named Dejuan. Beth treated Dejuan with such grace and unconditional regard. Dejuan, remembering that, still contacts her to this day! Dejuan recently brought his son to the Agency to meet Beth. Dejuan told Beth that he kept all the inspirational books and special mementos and gifts she gave to him while he was placed in a residential facility to inspire him and keep him believing in himself!

Submitted by Jennifer Kollar, Public Information Officer,
Mahoning County Children Services

Jennifer Thompson has been an adoption assessor for 19 years, spending nine years at Children Services and 10 years at NOAS. She has facilitated 50 adoptions. Her most memorable legalization occurred just a few weeks ago when a 12-year-old girl was adopted in what was a very intimate adoption. The number of people who were in attendance was a testament to how special this day was to so many people. In attendance were not only the adoption family but members of the birth family as well as previous foster parents. Everyone in the courtroom was asked to speak about the little girl and give the family words of encouragement. There wasn't a dry eye in the courtroom, including the Judge.

Jennifer never knew she wanted to be a social worker until she took her first class in college. From there, her interest in foster care and adoption took off. Jennifer states, "My role in foster families' lives is important because I am the first person to guide them in their journey of foster care and adoption, a very uncharted territory for most. I always keep the lines of communication open with my families because the key to a good working relationship is trust and honesty." In regard to the children she places, Jennifer thinks it's important to be another loving adult in their lives to point them in the right direction. Jennifer continues, "I always try to be the caseworker I would have wanted if I was ever in that situation as a child."

Submitted by Cheryl Tarantino, Executive Director, NOAS



Susan Kautz-Darden is celebrating 30-year career this month and more than 80 adoption finalizations. She is extraordinarily dedicated to adoption services and is a state-wide trainer in addition to her role at Bellefaire JCB child service agency where she does assessment work with birth parents and adoptive families, birth parent counseling, and management of all agency assessors.

Submitted by Alison Trotter, Bellefaire JCB

Kate McBride has been working at Pathway Caring for Children for seven years. For the last 6, she has been responsible for the agencies adoption work in addition to carrying a foster care caseload of her own. In that time, she has been instrumental in the completion of 87 adoptions with another 19 currently in process. Kate takes a true personal interest in the families she works with by truly getting to know them. She is a fantastic advocate for our kids and families!

Submitted by Dawn Killian, Foster Care and Adoption Director,
Pathway Caring for Children



**Department of
Children & Youth**