



NEWS RELEASE

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**For more information,
contact:
Nancy Seelbach
Geauga Family First
Council Coordinator
(440) 285-1201**

COMMUNITY MEMBERS RECEIVE JOHN MURRAY AWARD FOR THEIR WORK WITH GEAUGA FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Chardon, OH. October 23, 2017 – Two community members were recognized earlier this week for their passionate work on behalf of Geauga families and children at the 9th John Murray Commitment to Families and Children Award reception held at the Geauga Public Library System Administrative Center. The Geauga Family First Council, a collaborative of local agencies and community representatives, sponsors the event.

The 2017 Award winners are:

- **Tim Kehres** – has been with Big Brothers/Big Sisters for over 30 years, the last 13 years as Executive Director. Anyone who knows Tim knows he is a passionate voice for kids wherever he goes. While at Big Brothers/Big Sisters he's greatly expanded the programs offered because he sees the potential in all kids and wants to impact as many as possible.
- **Steve Mann** – has been a volunteer tutor at Burton Elementary for the past 4 years where he's worked with over 600 kids and provided over 2,900 volunteer hours. Steve has an understated ability to genuinely connect with kids in all different grades and subjects and sees his role not only as a tutor but as a mentor and friend.

“This award is presented on a bi-annual basis to individuals in Geauga County, who have exhibited a continued commitment to Geauga’s families and children, coupled with a special passion for their work,” says Don Rice, President of Geauga Family First Council and the Superintendent at the Geauga Board of DD.

Since 2001 Geauga Family First Council has presented the John Murray Award to individuals who “go above and beyond” in supporting and advocating for children and



families whether as a direct service volunteer, a board member, a human service professional or some combination of all three. This year the Council received nominations for 9 individuals “all of whom significantly impact the lives of Geauga’s children making the selection process extremely difficult,” according to Nancy Seelbach, the Geauga Family First Council Coordinator.

As Brad Welch, the Council’s Case Services Coordinator, said in his presentation: “all of the award winners had several special qualities in common including - quiet effectiveness, an ongoing commitment to Geauga children, and a passion for their work.”

The award is named in honor of John Murray, an original member of Geauga Family First Council and the Geauga County Administrator from 1993 to 1999. “John Murray epitomized the phrase ‘above and beyond the call of duty’”, Craig Swenson, the Executive Director of Geauga County Job & Family Services pointed out. “John was interested in the progress of each child and in his own quiet but effective way, pushed Geauga Family First Council and other local agencies and administrators to keep the best interest of each child and family at the heart of their decision-making.” The John Murray Award was established by Council in 2001. Past winners include: Martie & Bob Ballish, Ruth Carlton, and Joann Leach in 2001; Susan Hallums, Judge Charles Henry, and Andrea Pollock in 2003; Deputy Joe Keough, Linda Myers, and former County Commissioner Bill Repke in 2005; Dr. Heng Wang, Lynn Kempf, Wally Waldbauer, and Frank Scarano in 2007; Tracy Jordan, Meredith Myers and Helyne Walker in 2009; Rochelle Payne and Dr. William Rowane in 2011; Deb Pruce, Sara Shining, and Tom & Peggy Hannon in 2013; and Cathy Yane and Claire Zurbach in 2015.

One other special presentation was made at the reception to Natalie Smith, Ravenwood Health’s Child & Family Program Director. Her award was given in recognition of her exceptional therapeutic skills, leadership, community collaboration, and the compassion she brings to Geauga families.

The Geauga Family First Council is a partnership of government agencies, community organizations, and family representatives who work together to improve the well-being of children and families. Through prevention, early intervention and the provision of services which support the entire family the Council is strongly committed to helping remove barriers for Geauga’s children. The Council has helped develop, and currently funds, a wide range of community-based services which include the BRIDGES Program, the Family Stability Program, the Geauga Therapeutic Youth Center, Geauga Help Me Grow, and Geauga’s ENGAGE Program.

