



NEWS RELEASE

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

Chardon, OH. October 27, 2015 – Two community members were recently recognized for their passionate work on behalf of Geauga families and children at the 8th 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 2015 Award winners are:

- Claire Zurbach – for the past 5 years Clarie has volunteered his time and talents tutoring Cardinal Intermediate School students thru the Geauga JFS Volunteer Tutoring Program. Claire is known for passing onto kids his passion and excitement for learning. His enthusiasm and caring shines thru to each child whose life he touches.
- Cathy Yane – is the Administrative Assistant at Metzenbaum Center for the Help Me Grow and Early Intervention programs where she is viewed as the “glue” and “go-to” person. Cathy has been with Metz in a variety of capacities since 1990 and one of her special gifts in terms of serving and supporting families comes from her experience as the parent of a son with disabilities.

“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 7 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’”, Tim Taylor, the former Executive Director of Geauga County Job & Family Services recalls. “John was interested in the progress of each child and in his own quite 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; and Deb Puce, Sara Shininger, and Tom & Peggy Hannon in 2013.

Two other special presentations were made at the reception one to: Jennifer and Daryl Deckard for all the funding they provide for a wide variety of community programs which touch the lives of Geauga’s children and families. The other special award was presented to Gina Schultz, the JFS Social Services Director, an important and tireless advocate for Geauga’s children and families on many different levels.

The Geauga Family First Council is a partnership of government agencies and community organizations committed to improving 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, Geauga Therapeutic Youth Center, Geauga Help Me Grow, and Geauga’s ENGAGE Program.

