

# Mahoning Kids Matter

SUMMER 2020



Mahoning County  
Children Services

THE EXCLUSIVE PUBLICATION FOR STAFF, STAKEHOLDERS, DONORS & FRIENDS

SUMMER 2020



**Report Child Abuse  
Because Kids Can't**

*Protecting Children, Preserving Families*

Mahoning County  
Children Services **REPORT LINE 24/7  
330.941.8888**

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

### ABOUT US

- Agency Adds New Social Justice Resource Page to Website . . . . .2
- Agency Follows New "Return to Traditional Work Plan" . . . . .3
- Agency Staff & Youth Graduation Celebration . . . . .4
- Welcome New Staff & New Roles . . . . .7

### OUR COMMUNITY

- COVID Casework Stories from the Front Line . . . . .4
- Agency Donor Named "WYTV Hometown Hero" . . . . .6
- Austintown TCC VERIZON Donate "Bags of Love" . . . . .8

## Child Abuse Warning Signs

Do You Know  
The Signs??

**LEARN MORE**

Mahoning County  
Children Services

## Mahoning County Children Services Board Issues Statement: *Re-Affirms Social Justice Position*

Mahoning County Children Services Board unanimously voted at their June 9, 2020 meeting to adopt, support and embrace the following SOCIAL JUSTICE POSITION STATEMENT: REFLECTION AND RESOURCES that addresses and responds to the civil unrest events in our local, regional, national and international communities:

### SOCIAL JUSTICE POSITION STATEMENT: REFLECTION AND RESOURCES

"It is difficult to find the words to express the sadness and pain currently impacting communities across our country. It's not just about the recent events we've witnessed, but also about a long history of racial injustice and inequity. Mahoning County Children Services Board deeply values diversity, equity, and inclusion and works towards addressing issues of racial, social, and economic disparities with our partners to bring about positive change. We stand for kindness, empathy and respect for all individuals. We believe racism is simply unacceptable. It's not only what we believe, it's also at the core of the most basic principles of human rights and justice. We know there is no easy answer to systemic racial inequality, but we also know that we must act and be part of the solution."

"This Statement reflects Mahoning County Children Services Board's commitment to racial equality and social justice. More broadly, it is a statement that echoes the ethical code(s) and value statements of health and human service professions who are essential to the well-being of our society. It would be negligent for the Agency to remain silent as we are a community leader serving vulnerable children and families," states Dr. Joseph P. Mosca, Chairman, Mahoning County Children Services Board.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 | SEE SOCIAL JUSTICE

**MISSION:** Mahoning County Children Services,  
in partnership with the community, is a committed  
leader in protecting children while helping preserve

# About Us

Mahoning Kids Matter | SUMMER 2020



## SOCIAL JUSTICE

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"It is Social Workers' ethical responsibilities to the broader society that requires our Agency to affirmatively challenge social injustice including, but not limited to discrimination and other manifestations thereof. As such, we believe that to remain silent would be tantamount to an abrogation of our duty," states Randall B. Muth, J.D., Executive Director, Mahoning County Children Services.

**BACKGROUND:** Mahoning County Children Services adheres to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics "serves as a guide to the everyday professional conduct of social workers." Section 6.01-6.04 a-d of the NASW Code of Ethics states: "social workers have ethical responsibilities to the broader society." This particular section of the NASW Code of Ethics also encourages social workers to:

**ENGAGE** in social and political action;

**ADVOCATE** for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs;

**PROMOTE** social justice and especially in regard to vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed and exploited people and groups to ensure all individuals have equal access to resources, employment services and opportunities to meet their basic human needs to develop fully;

**ACT/PREVENT** and **ELIMINATE** domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability.

## New Social Justice Resource Page Added to Mahoningkids.com Website



As Advocates for Children and Families, the Agency has also created a **new** [SOCIAL JUSTICE RESOURCE Page](#) on its website: [mahoningkids.com](http://mahoningkids.com). The new Page RE-AFFIRMS the Agency's deeply-rooted commitment to Social Justice. This new page invites and encourages all Visitors to our website to learn more about, reflect upon and become positive Agents of Social Justice CHANGE. This page will also provide timely Social Justice information and resources to help families address, explain and foster discussions on a variety of Social Justice topics with children.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE INFORMATION & RESOURCES**  
[FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF RESOURCES CLICK THIS LINK](#)

## | COVID-19 | Visit Agency's New Information & Resource Page for Updates

**CLICK HERE TO VISIT OUR COVID-19 INFORMATION PAGE**



**KEEPING KIDS & FAMILIES  
SAFE & HEALTHY**



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Children Services  
330-941-8888 [www.mahoningkids.com](http://www.mahoningkids.com)

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# About Us

Mahoning Kids Matter | SUMMER 2020



## 2020 Executive Staff, Board, Advisory & Commissioners

### ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE STAFF

#### Executive Director

Randall B. Muth, J.D.

#### Assistant Director

Rona Curtis

#### Intake Services Department

Bradley Smith, Program Administrator

#### Family Services Department

Julie Rudolph, Program Administrator

#### Placement Services Department

Anthony Paris, Program Administrator

#### Fiscal Department

Denise Barnes-Carper, Fiscal Officer

#### Human Resources Department

Susan Babinec, Manager

#### Information Technology Department

Joshua Cayson, Manager

#### Public Information Department

Jennifer T. Kollar, Public Information Officer

### MAHONING COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES BOARD

Dr. Joseph Mosca, **Chairman**

Dr. Benjamin McGee, **Vice Chairman**

Rev. Dr. Lewis W. Macklin, II

Samuel Moffie

Marilyn Montes, **Secretary**

Loisjean Haynes-Paige

Daniel Wakefield

Kriss Wolford

### MAHONING COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DJ Depp

Denise Dick

Megan Ellashek

Katrina Harris

Calvin Jones

Brigid Kennedy

Michele Kuhar

Tracy Lamb

Rev. Lewis Macklin

David Magura

Andrea L. Mahone

Lisa Manente

Pete Milliken

Mary Alice Noble

Officer Shawnacie Ott

Dr. Matthew J. Paylo

Johanna Slivinske

Mary Jo Truman

Philip Volpe-Monrean

Yvonne Wilson

### MAHONING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

David C. Ditzler

Carol Rimedio Righetti

Anthony Traficanti



Agency

## HEALTH & SAFETY

Committee News

## COVID-19

### Agency Follows New “Return to Traditional Work Environment Plan”

The Agency is currently following the Health & Safety Committee's **“Return To Traditional Work Environment Plan”**. The Plan provides guidelines for health, safety and hygiene policies and protocols. The Plan also addresses personal protective equipment (PPE) needs and building occupancy staffing levels in order to re-assimilate staff who have been working remotely back into a traditional office environment at the Agency.

**NEW COVID INFORMATIONAL PAGE:** Stay informed about the Agency's Access and Operations with our new [COVID-19 Resource & Information Page](#) added to the Agency's website.

**COVID CLEANING:** A comprehensive and thorough disinfection cleaning was completed by a professional cleaning vendor. All high-touch surfaces, communal and personal desk spaces were cleaned at the Agency prior to the Return to Traditional Work Plan was implemented.

**FACE COVERING REQUIRED:** All Agency Staff and Visitors are **REQUIRED** to wear Face Coverings in Agency communal areas. Masks donated to the Agency are available to staff. Contact Susan Babinec or Randall Muth.

Mahoning County Children Services Health and Safety Committee is dedicated to maintaining the safety and well-being of all Mahoning County Children Services Board (MCCSB) employees. The committee meets monthly to discuss and make recommendations to help improve the overall safety of staff, as well as the work environment of the Agency. If staff have a question or concern, contact a committee member:

#### The Health and Safety Committee Members:

Cynthia Berend  
Rona Curtis  
Marisa Litch  
Christine Powell

Meghan Tarantino  
Kimberly Wilson  
Dave Workley



**Mahoning Kids Matter** is the official publication of Mahoning County Children Services, and published by the Agency's Public Information Office.

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Mahoning Kids Matter | SUMMER 2020



## Congrats To Staff Graduates



**Family Celebration:** Brittany Snyder and family.

### **BACHELOR'S DEGREE**

**Brittany Snyder** received her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Youngstown State University. Brittany has been working at the Agency for three years in the Staff Support/Clerical Unit.

### **MASTER'S DEGREE GRADS**

**Lynette Paris** received a Master in Public Administration from Capella University. She earned her undergraduate Bachelor Degree in Psychology from Youngstown State University. She is currently serving as Quality Improvement Specialist in the Agency's Compliance Department. Lynette has been with the Agency for 14 years.

**Erica Cannaci** has served as a Mahoning County Children Services Child Welfare Caseworker for 4 years in the Agency's Ongoing Unit of the Family Services Department. Erica recently earned a Master's Degree in Social Work from Youngstown State University. Her undergraduate Bachelor's Degree is also in Social Work.

**Taylor Kutsch** earned her Master of Social Work from Youngstown State University. Taylor currently holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. She has been with the Agency for three years currently serving as a Child Welfare Caseworker in the Agency's Intake Services Department.



**Three Degrees :** (left to right) Nicole Mrofchak, Erica Canacci and Taylor Kutsch celebrate graduation with Master's Degrees in Social Work.

**Nicole Mrofchak** graduated with a Master's in Social Work from Youngstown State University. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. Nicole has been serving as a Child Welfare Caseworker in the Agency's Family Services' On-going Department for four years.

**SPECIAL THANKS:** Thank you to Field Supervisors: **Theresa Pancoe, LISW-S** and **Elizabeth Schmid, LISW-S**. Field Supervisors provide oversight and supervision of internship hours requirements for students working toward their Master's Degrees. Both Supervisors work at Mahoning County Children Services. Pancoe is the Adoption Unit Supervisor for the Placement Services Department. Schmid is an On-going Unit Supervisor in the Family Services Department.

## Agency Celebrates 2020 High School Grads



Mahoning County Children Services has several wonderful reasons to celebrate this graduation season! Two Agency-involved youth graduated from area high schools.

High School Graduation is always a special time for for students. However, for youth in foster care, graduation is an especially significant milestone. Many of these students have experienced difficult childhoods and significant trauma throughout their young lives. Remaining in school despite these circumstances and overcoming obstacles is truly an amazing testament and accomplishment and the hope for a bright future.

Each year, Mahoning County Children Services recognizes Agency-involved youth who graduate with a Graduation/Luncheon Party in their honor. The event features a catered lunch, a DJ, dancing, photos and gifts for the graduates. The Grads are encouraged to invite family members and friends to the party and Agency staff, Board Members and Stakeholders are also invited.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the annual Agency Graduation Event was cancelled.

**Congratulations and all the best to our Graduates now and in their Bright Futures!**

## Bright Futures Ahead *Congratulations* 2020 CLASS



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## 2 Mahoning County Caseworkers Featured In “Profiles of Hope & Courage”

NOTE: Public Children Services Association of Ohio is featuring stories from the front lines of child protection to raise awareness of the challenges our children services professionals, and the families they serve, are facing amid the world-wide pandemic. Despite all the changes in their daily lives, Caseworkers remain hopeful and courageous.

### BETH: ‘COVID CAN’T STOP ADOPTION!’

Beth is an Adoption caseworker with Mahoning County Children Services. She has 18 years’ experience in child protection, including her current experience as well as experience with families working toward reunification. One huge change for her in the era of COVID-19 has been the inability to see people face to face.

“Nothing can replace the in-person contact, seeing your coworkers,” she said. “That’s the part that is the most difficult to adjust to, the lack of contact in a people-oriented profession.”

While Beth is doing a lot of virtual meetings, she is still required to complete each family’s final safety audit in person. The safety audit is different now, as she explained.

“You maintain social distance. You stand far apart and you don’t touch anything, don’t sign anything. There is no paper and nothing is exchanged. It’s so unnatural.”

Adoption finalizations are different, too. Ordinarily, adoptions are finalized in Mahoning County Probate Judge Robert N. Rusu’s courtroom. Agency staff attend as well as friends and relatives of the adoptive family. The courtroom is often buzzing with



congratulatory words, hugs, laughter, and smiles. Judge Rusu has a tradition he includes in each adoption finalization. He has the adoptee come up to the bench and allows the child to “finalize” the adoption by striking his gavel and exclaiming together, “Adoption granted!”

With Ohio’s stay-at-home order in place, that wasn’t possible. But Beth was determined that the adoption would still be special.

Recently, one family’s adoption finalization hearing was held by video teleconference. The court encouraged the family to invite supporters to watch remotely. It was as festive as it could possibly be with family, friends, the court, and children services staff all watching and sharing congratulations.

### MARCUS: ‘HELPING PEOPLE IS MY PASSION’

Mahoning County and a mental health specialist with Youngstown City Schools. In his free time, he coaches youth track and volleyball.

“I love helping people,” said Marcus. “This is my passion.” It has been hard for Marcus to adjust to checking in with clients virtually.

“For me, I am a people person, I like to engage face to face. It was hard for me to take a step back,” said Marcus. “I’m definitely going back to home visits as soon as possible so I can give that extra hand if needed.”

Even though he is not seeing many people face-to-face now, Marcus remains dedicated to his clients. He shared the story of one client, “Ms. D” (name changed to protect privacy). Ms. D has been diligently working her case plan since Marcus was assigned to her. She met all her goals for the past year while her son and daughter were in foster care in different homes.

Ms. D. has maintained her sobriety and celebrated an entire year of recovery. At her own initiative, she joined a recovery program and completed a program to improve her financial skills. She had weekly visits with her children at the children services agency.



The court recognized Ms. D.’s progress and granted her unsupervised weekend visits.

The weekend visits were going well for several months. However, when the stay-at-home order was issued, the foster caregiver for Ms. D.’s daughter was not comfortable with the girl leaving for a visit and returning because of the exposure risk. Many foster caregivers have expressed concerns about this. Ms. D.’s son continued his visits because his foster caregiver was willing to do so.

Ms. D. was devastated by not being able to see her daughter in person. She called Marcus in tears. She felt as though all her hard work was for nothing.

“I felt bad that Ms. D.’s daughter couldn’t visit face-to-face with her family. However, I made sure I kept the family’s spirits up,” said Marcus.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Children Services Donor Wanda Marland Named “WYTV Home Town Hero”

Comfort & Hope — is not only the name of Wanda Marland’s organization —it’s also her life Mission.

Year-round Wanda provides ‘comfort and hope’ to children in foster care. She ensures that every child placed in Mahoning County Children Services Foster Care receives a Birthday Gift Bag on their birthday. The gift bags are a message to let these children know that they’re not forgotten and especially on their birthday.

Wanda and her husband Bill deliver 40-50 birthday bags each month to the Agency.

Each Birthday Gift Bag is filled with a comfort blanket and other age-appropriate new clothing, plush toys, and other kid-friendly themed items.

Wanda has created Birthday Gift Bags for hundreds of Mahoning County Children. As the number of children and families the Agency serve on our caseloads continues to grow, so does the number of birthdays each month. In order for Wanda’s Comfort & Hope Birthday Bag Program to continue to be successful and to keep up with increased demand, she needs to find others

to help. Donations have made all of these gifts possible.

Wanda has been creating Birthday Joy with her gift bags and blankets for children since 2005. In addition to providing Birthday Bags for Mahoning County Children Services, Wanda has also been



**Wanda Marland proudly display the hundreds of Birthday Bags she creates and donates every month for Children in Foster Care.**

providing birthday gifts for Northeast Ohio Adoption Services (NOAS) and she recently expanded her mission to Trumbull County Children Services partnering with their Foster Parent Association.

“Back then I was a church secretary and people would come into my office, and



**WANDA MARLAND**

they would tell me their stories and I just wanted to help them,” she said. “I thought I’d do a three-month trial— as you can see, I’m still doing it.”

Kathy Evans, Marketing Director, Northeast Ohio Adoption Services, said Wanda is a “Wonder Woman.” “When these kids get these gifts, they just light up. They truly light up. It makes them know that they matter, that people care,” Evans stated.

“Amazing” is the word Mahoning County Children Services’ Jennifer Kollar uses to describe Wanda. “To be able to offer special birthday gifts to children on their birthday who are in foster care — simply amazing,” Kollar said.

To get involved, message Wanda via her Facebook Page: [Comfort & Hope](#)



**WE ARE THE FUTURE.  
WE NEED YOU NOW!**  
*Become a Foster/Adoptive Parent*



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# OUR COMMUNITY

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## PROFILES OF HOPE & COURAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

### BETH:

Beth wanted to ensure that Judge Rusu's tradition remained intact. She purchased a wooden mallet and decorated it with a festive purple ribbon. Via video teleconference, just like he has done for every adoption finalization, Judge Rusu had the child bang the gavel and declare together, "Adoption granted!"

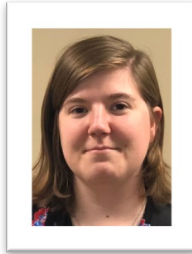
The stay-at-home order also did not allow for a special celebration that might ordinarily follow the ceremony. Beth teamed up with colleagues Theresa Pancoe and Jennifer Kollar to hatch a plan to complement the "Hoot & Holler Drive-by Parade" planned by the adoptive family with an oversized balloon-themed sign in the family's yard. It added to the celebration of their special day.

### MARCUS:

Ms. D. kept working her case plan, and her hard work paid off. She was recently reunited with both her children. The magistrate in her case applauded her success. Ms. D. could not hold back her tears of happiness and excitement when Marcus arrived with her daughter.

"Ms. D's story is inspiring and encouraging. She is a shining example of maintaining her faith and working hard to get her life in order and her family back in the face of adversity and uncertain times," explained Marcus.

TO READ MORE PROFILES OF  
HOPE & COURAGE VISIT:  
[PUBLIC CHILDREN SERVICES  
ASSOCIATION OF OHIO](#)



## New Staff Faces

**BRIANNA WOJTOWICZ** has recently joined the Agency as a new Child Welfare Caseworker in the Ongoing Unit of the Agency's Family Services Department. Brianna holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from the University Of Toledo. *Welcome Brianna!*

## New Staff Roles

**SAMANTHA ENSIGN** has been selected for the Lead Child Welfare Caseworker position in the Intake Department. *Congratulations Samantha!*

**MARGARET BAKER** was selected to continue her role as the Lead Child Welfare Caseworker as a Floater. *Congratulations Margaret!*



## Keep Connected With Us @



[Website: Mahoningkids.com](http://Mahoningkids.com)



[Mahoning County Children Services @MahoningKids](#)



[MC Children Services @MahoningKids](#)



[Instagram: mahoningkidz](#)

## Local Austintown TCC Verizon Store Donates “Bags of Love” for Foster Kids Rock Campaign



TCC, a Verizon authorized retailer with stores across the country, planned a huge campaign “Foster Kids Rock” giveaway focused on children in the foster care system. During the first week of June, TCC stores across the country gave away over 55,000 “Bags of Love” to agencies supporting families and children in foster care. Each bag is filled with everyday necessities children may not have access to when entering a new placement. We know children often only have the clothes on their backs and we wanted to give something meaningful to them to let them know we care.

**TCC Verizon Rocks:** (left) Liz, TCC Verizon Retail Store Employee with Shane King, District Manager, TCC Verizon, presented a variety of age appropriate “Bags of Love Care Kits” for Mahoning County Children entering foster care. The donated Bags of Love included age-appropriate items for children ages infant to teens.



## Agency Foster Care Recruitment Campaign Gets ‘A Lift’ from WRTA



If you haven't noticed yet, Mahoning County Children Services' “Open Your Heart & Home” Foster Parent Recruitment advertisements are posted on the sides of several WRTA Buses. WRTA bus routes travel extensively throughout downtown Youngstown and surrounding areas in Mahoning County. The bus campaign runs now until early 2021. The goal is to be able to advertise our great need for foster parents in smaller community pockets and neighborhoods where traditional advertising like TV and Billboards may not fully reach,” explains Jennifer Kollar, Public Information Officer, Mahoning County Children Services.



# Open Your Heart & Home

Become a  
**Foster / Adoptive Parent**



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