

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STARK COUNTY FOSTER PARENT PRESENTED FAMILY OF THE YEAR AWARD

Canton, Ohio - The Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) presented Stark County foster parent, Ella Kirkland, with the 2025 Family of the Year award on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, during their annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. Ella has been a licensed foster care parent with Stark County Job & Family Services' Division of Children Services since 1993.

According to the PCSAO, the Family of the Year award recognizes families—including birth parents, kinship caregivers, foster parents, and adoptive families—who make a significant positive difference in the lives of children in Ohio's child protection system, demonstrating success in overcoming challenges to provide safety and permanence.”

“For the past 32 years, we have been continually inspired by Ella Kirkland’s unwavering dedication, compassion, and exemplary care for the children of Stark County.” said Tricia Mayle, Deputy Director of the Division of Children Services.

Ella's journey as a foster parent began after she raised her own son, primarily as a single mother following a divorce. Once her son reached adulthood, friends encouraged her to consider fostering—a suggestion she embraced wholeheartedly. In 1993, Ella welcomed her first placement: a sibling group she cared for with steadfast devotion for two and a half years until they were adopted into a permanent home.

“Ella Kirkland embodies the very best of what it means to be a foster parent. The children in Ella's care consistently flourish, benefitting from her steady guidance, high expectations, and deep empathy,” said Jamie Horey, Program Administrator in the Division of Children Services. “She builds strong relationships with each child, recognizing their individual needs and strengths. She advocates fiercely to ensure they have access to the supports and opportunities that allow them to thrive. Her home is a place of healing, stability, and unconditional love.”

Ella is intentional about creating lasting, joyful memories. Her annual Fourth of July and Christmas celebrations are legendary, often bringing former foster children back to reunite, reconnect, and enjoy her incredible cooking. She makes each child feel like part of a larger, loving family and extended community—one they remain connected to long after leaving her home.

“Her decades of selfless service, compassionate parenting, and deep-rooted commitment to children and families make her an ideal recipient of this honor.” said Tricia Mayle, Deputy Director of the Division of Children Services. “We are incredibly fortunate to have her as part of our foster care community, and we know she will continue to make a lasting impact for years to come.”

For additional information about the PCSAO’s annual conference, visit PCSAO.org. To learn how to become a foster parent in Stark County, call 330-451-8789 or visit StarkJFS.org.



Devray Kirkland, Ella Kirkland, Shaline Ramsey

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