

The Court Reporter

A Message from Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio

Addiction is individual but it can effect so many others. It is overwhelming. To break its shackles is a time-consuming, emotionally-draining, physically-taxing battle. But, as two women have demonstrated, like so many others who have benefitted from the Court's Family Reunification through Recovery Court, the human spirit can conquer even the harshest of demons. Allow me to offer my congratulations and respect to Judith Dietz and Ashlie Roberson for achieving sobriety and having their families back. I hope you are as inspired by their story as much as I am.

Also in this newsletter there is a story about an award I recently received. I am so pleased to accept this award from the Ohio CASA/GAL Association, for this reason: it has my name on the plaque, but I accept it on behalf of the hundreds of CASA volunteers and our program staff who work so hard to assure that children's needs are met during a difficult time in their lives.

And, finally, I would like to wish for all of you a safe, happy, peaceful, and blessed holiday season.



Judge Teodosio

FRRC Honors Two Graduates from the Program

Family is everything. There is nothing more important. However, sometimes circumstances occur that allow other influences to apply equal importance in one's life that can disrupt the family unit.

A 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) determined that 15 million adults suffer from alcohol misuse disorder, but only 10% of them seek treatment. Substance misuse can interfere with so many facets of one's life, but one of the most dire consequences is the disruption it can cause to the family.

If a parent is charged with substance misuse, Summit County Children Services (SCCS) is obligated to investigate the family home and determine if the agency should take temporary custody of the children in the home until the parent demonstrates that they can achieve sobriety so the children can return home.

It is a lonesome journey, but in 2013, the Summit County Juvenile Court made certain that a parent referred to the program from SCCS didn't make that journey on their own. It established the Family Reunification through Recovery Court (FRRC) where the Court and community collaborators aid the parent through the process of reunification. The parent would be tasked with completing a series of goals that include remaining sober as evidenced by negative drug screens which entail a 10-panel test. A social worker, Court staff, and others would provide guidance and encouragement as well as some direct dialogue during frequent meetings with Court Magistrates Laura Lynd-Robinson and Lee Ann Schaffer to track their progress. Once the parent completes the parameters of the program, particularly sobriety, the parent will graduate from the program and be reunited with his or her family.

Recently, two women, Judith Dietz and Ashlie Roberson, completed the program and a celebration was held in the second floor Courtroom. Both Magistrates congratulated the women for the courage and commitment they showed to reunify their families.

One of the social workers who aided Ms. Dietz, perhaps best summarized the experience for both women.

"Today we are here at the finish line, and it wasn't always a straight line, but that's ok. Recovery isn't a straight line. There are always twists and turns, there are setbacks and barriers. We went through all of those," he said. "But once you got pointed in the right direction, you were all in, and there was no stopping you."

He praised her for her commitment to recovery, to the program, but more than anything, to her children.

A social worker for Ms. Roberson let her know that their relationship didn't end with her FRRC graduation.

"You went from there to here. I am so proud of you. And I want you to know this: even though you graduated, I'm still here for you. You can call me anytime for any reason."

There have been dozens of men and women who have been helped by the FRRC, which in 2014, was designated by the Ohio Supreme Court as a Specialized Docket.

The FRRC is a referral-based program, and if you feel the services provided by the FRRC are something a person could need, please contact the FRRC Coordinator at 330-643-4547.



With Magistrate Lee Ann Schaffer, left, and Magistrate Laura Lund-Robinson, right, Judith Dietz poses with her children after her FRRC graduation.



Ashlie Roberson, center, stands with her children following her graduation from the FRRC.

JUDGE TEODOSIO NAMED OHIO CASA ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Summit County Juvenile Court Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio was named the 2023 Ohio Child Advocate of the year at the Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardian ad Litem (CASA/GAL) Association's Celebrate Kids! Conference. Judge Teodosio, Summit County's longest-serving Juvenile Court Judge, received the award from Ohio CASA Board president Joshua Eck.



Judge Teodosio stands with Ohio CASA Board President Joshua Eck after receiving the CASA Advocate of the Year Award.

The Juvenile Court's CASA/GAL program is the largest in the state of Ohio and is regarded as one of the top five largest programs in the nation.

The CASA/GAL program trains volunteers to act in the best interests of children who have family issues that result in becoming Court-involved through no fault of the child. The volunteers assigned to their cases do a thorough examination of the children's home lives to determine if their needs are being met. The volunteer then reports back to CASA/GAL staff and recommendations are made to make certain the child is being cared for while the Court process is completed. There are currently over 16,000 children in care in Ohio at any given time.

The volunteers are the life blood of the program, and Judge Teodosio made that point clear in her remarks following the presentation of the award.

"My judicial career has been focused on impacting the lives of young people and families across Summit County, so I am truly honored," said Judge Teodosio. "Not only does this award highlight the work implemented in our Court, but also the commitment and collaboration we have had with our CASA volunteers for years. These volunteers give me important insight into a child's wishes so I can make the best decision for their future."

It was noted that Judge Teodosio's commitment to progressive and innovative programming for young people was central in her selection for the award. Some of the Juvenile Justice reforms she has implemented have served for other Juvenile Courts in Ohio and nationally.

Judge Teodosio lent some her expertise to volunteers, CASA staff members, attorneys and other conference attendees. She detailed strategies to assist or prevent young people in foster care from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

If you would like to volunteer to become involved in the Court's CASA/GAL program, you are asked to call 330-643-2957.