

## HONOREES: CASEWORK STAFF

### Karen Jones

Missouri Children's Division

Nominated by Angela Dockett

*"Each time that Karen is asked to step up for a work or volunteer opportunity, she rarely says no, even when she has several other irons in the fire."*

Karen Jones has been providing services to children and families for 28 years, although Karen says her social work career really started when she was 12 years old as her parents became foster parents. They helped her "realize that all people are important—those that struggle, those that hurt, all." She currently is supervisor of licensing, adoption and subsidy for

resource families in St. Louis County. She supervises eight staff, approximately 475 resource homes and 1,635 subsidy families. Besides her service with staff and families, she provides staff with support and resources when they work with children of incarcerated parents. Karen has a continued interest in helping children of incarcerated parents know "they should not feel incarceration is their fault or feel shame that society may try to bring on them." Karen finds motivation in the success she sees in the families with which she has worked.



### Denise Kelley

Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition

Nominated by Gayle Flavin and the Extreme Recruitment Team

*"Denise is the dealer of hope for her staff, our children and our families ... the hope she gives us is literally making the world a better place."*

Denise Kelley has overseen numerous programs at the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition over the past 15 years. Her greatest involvement has been with Extreme Recruitment. Denise operates under the assumption that every child is adoptable and every challenge is capable of being overcome. She has helped



the program succeed in reaching finalizations for children through her critical thinking, ideas for overcoming barriers and encouragement. Denise has constructed an environment where her staff believes that every child is adoptable and has a right to a loving family. Denise is more than a supervisor; she is a mentor, role model and cheerleader for her adoption recruiters. Denise continues to stay motivated by the passionate professionals she works alongside, as well as remembering where she came from and the strength within each family unit.

### Gail Knipshild

Children's Home Society of Missouri

Nominated by Rachel Neukirch

*"Gail personifies what is meant by the Stepping Up for Kids Award."*

Gail Knipshild has made an outstanding difference for children in foster, adoptive and kinship care in both her personal and professional lives. She and her husband adopted a four-year-old who is now their 30-year-old son. Gail develops in-service training for the area's foster and adoptive parents, and is known for the high quality and thoroughness of her materials and for her honesty and integrity in addressing the chal-

lenges parents face when their children have histories of abuse and neglect. She has developed curricula on understanding the impact of trauma on brain development, the impact of adding a new child to an existing family, the unique issues of parenting children with sexual abuse histories, and much more. In the past three years, she has trained over 1,200 parents and professionals, providing over 700 hours of training. Gail says she is "always amazed at the generosity that parents have that step up to foster children, it is a step into the unknown."



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**We are proud to be part  
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Places for People's mission is to provide caring, effective services to help those with the greatest challenges recover from mental illness and associated chronic illnesses.

# HONOREES: RESOURCE FAMILIES

## Adella Coleman

*Nominated by Elizabeth Wessels*

***"I am convinced that she has magical powers."***

After 30 years of managing retail stores, Adella Coleman told her pastor she felt the calling to become a foster parent. Now in her ninth year of foster parenting, she is regarded by the Children's Division as one of its greatest assets. She is willing to help absolutely anyone and never complains about it. She recently had a boy in her home who had experienced severe neglect and was physically violent at times. Within one week with Adella, he was using manners and no longer hitting. She worked proactively with his preschool and daycare to ensure



his needs were met. She is kind yet stern and shows children, who have faced many hardships during their short lives, what it feels like to be loved. She is a great role model for many lives that she touches, including those of the professionals that have the honor to work with her. Adella "loves her babies" and continues to foster because of "the strength God gives her every morning." Whether the child's face is happy, sad or angry, Adella says she stays motivated by the faces of the children.

## Jennifer and Shane Tripp

*Nominated by Philip Young*

***"The Tripps set the example for other Therapeutic Foster Parents by making 'the extra mile' the norm."***

Throughout their eight years as foster parents, Jennifer and Shane Tripp have always gone above and beyond to ensure children in their home feel a part of their family. They have worked with boys between the ages of 12 and 17 who have elevated needs, such as verbal and physical aggression in response to their trauma. The Tripps are always looking for ways to provide new activities, such as "first" ride on the metro or "first" trip to the zoo. The Tripps also work together as a team with the various caseworkers, DJOs and CASA advocates involved with the kids in their home. You can count on the

Tripps to be open to new ideas and strategies and to advocate strongly to ensure the best care for their children. The Tripps also are grateful to Angels Arms for the support and resources it provides to them. Being a foster parent runs in the family—Jennifer's mother has fostered children as well. Jennifer said, "We love our kids and they are the sunshine in our lives." Currently, the Tripps are recovering from a Labor Day weekend fire at their home that occurred while they were out of town.



## Jan and Paul Wilkin

*Nominated by Jennifer Thomas*

***"I have no doubt that in his short life in the Wilkin's care he knew love and nurturing ... what it was to be a part of a family."***

Jan and Paul Wilkin have diligently served every child placed in their home for the past eight years. They first considered becoming foster parents after hearing from a foster/adoption ministry and foster mother at their church. Since then, they have been extremely dependable regarding licensing requirements and can always be counted on to be active members of every professional team. In spring 2014, the Wilkins accepted a placement of a child with medical needs. They received



training to provide 24-hour nursing care, and made great efforts to constantly be at the boy's side through many hospital stays and countless doctor appointments. After he passed away in November 2015, the Wilkins held a memorial service in their home celebrating the boy's life. Today they continue to care for other children with medical needs. Jan said they continue to foster because they feel it is "a privilege to care for children who need a nurturing and safe environment as long as necessary."



### Epworth is proud to support the Stepping Up For Kids Awards.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of direct-service staff and resource families, hundreds of children & youth in St. Louis find forever homes each year.

