



Giving Back...

Therapist Toni Zingale uses her tough childhood experience to help kids in the neighborhood where she grew up.

Imagine the joy of having a child enter the world on Thanksgiving Day.
What greater reason for gratitude than the arrival of a healthy baby!

But there was no happy family gathered in the waiting room when Toni Zingale arrived. No proud dad to experience the miracle of her birth.

Toni was born in Marysville State Penitentiary where her mother had been incarcerated for the past six months, serving a sentence for possession of crack cocaine paraphernalia. It wouldn't be the last time.

"Growing up, I saw my share of things that should be concealed from kids. My mother suffered from addiction, and there was no hiding it, and my father was a cheap-beer alcoholic," Toni says.

The youngest of seven siblings, three of whom she's never even met, Toni grew up in Slavic Village and other inner-city neighborhoods, against a backdrop of domestic violence and

rampant drug abuse. At age 6, she was placed in foster care when her mother went back to prison.

It wasn't like things were good at home, but like many foster children, Toni had a hard time adjusting to foster care.

"I remember feelings of confusion, sadness and hatred from being away from home. Finally, my Aunt Diane petitioned for custody, and I went to live with her.

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A Message from Tom Royer, President/CEO



*Tom Royer
President and CEO*

A friend of mine asked me recently why I do what I do, and why I have stayed at Beech Brook so long (28 years). As I started to reply, it became apparent that the answer was more complicated than I thought.

After our conversation, I realized that we all come to Beech Brook for both common and different reasons. Some of us come because we think that many of our community's kids and families have been dealt a bad hand, and we believe that when we help create conditions which allow everyone to thrive, we will all do better. Some of us come because we have a special affinity for a certain group of kids or families whom we would like to help. And some of us come because we have had experience with some of the same difficulties our families are facing, and we want to give back.

Regardless of the reasons, we all come because we want to be part of something bigger than ourselves, something special. Beech Brook is that place. We all have a connection to the agency's mission, and that is the thing that binds us, even if we have taken different paths to get here.

I'm proud that Beech Brook employs highly trained and skilled individuals who provide services that help people reach their full potential and contribute to our community. We provide professional support that helps families build a solid social and emotional foundation for their children. We offer proven services and resources in schools and in the community to help children and teens navigate this important time in their lives, and we provide expert knowledge and resources for parents and others. In short, we want to do everything we can to make sure our community can raise great kids.

None of this could be accomplished without our staff. And while I enjoy my work and I get great fulfillment in helping to make our

mission come alive, it's the staff that has kept me here for 28 years. The truth is that our staff could choose to work anywhere. Our support staff, from maintenance to finance, human resources, operations and IT are qualified to work in any industry. But they choose to work here. Our direct service staff are the best in the business. They, too, have many other options but choose to be part of something very special that you just don't see everywhere.

It seems like yesterday that I was one of the new kids on the block. Now, not so much! But I'm not unique. I look around Beech Brook and see so many people, every day, whom I have known since we were young adults, before we were married, before we had kids or even grandkids. We have helped each other through tough times but have enjoyed many more good times together.

When I interview for open positions, I always tell the candidates that the best people I know (outside of my immediate family) work right here at Beech Brook. And that is the truth.

I am excited to see new staff come to Beech Brook, and I love to hear their stories and I hope that they benefit as much as I have from having a long career here.

In this issue, you'll read about just one of our staff members and why she was drawn to Beech Brook. We don't often tell our stories about our staff, but I think we need to. These are amazing people with amazing journeys. They bring a wealth of experience to the table and a deep passion for the work. They are the people who make Beech Brook a special place and the reason that we can accomplish all that we do for our community.

I chose to share my thoughts about our staff with you, not just because I'm proud of the work they do, but because I want you to know that as donors, you can feel confident that your investment in Beech Brook is a sound one. We are so grateful for your support, and we promise that we will continue to put your gifts to good use to help the children and families in our community thrive.

Thank you.



School may be out, but kids still need help.

So what does a school-based staff member do after that final bell rings?

School's out for summer. For many in the working world, that doesn't mean a whole lot. For school-based staff at Beech Brook, however, the arrival of summer brings drastic changes. Although the work with the children and families that we see throughout the year is the same, the setting and the approach can be very different.

So now that schools are closed, how do our staff members keep on helping the children and families?

Many therapists use the local geography of the neighborhood they serve to engage the kids throughout the summer. Not only are the recreation centers and libraries great spaces to meet with the children, but taking them to interesting local spots, such as the old Bedford Train Station or a community garden, can be valuable to them and perhaps something they have not experienced.

Caise McHale, a therapist in the Cleveland schools, says that she treats summers as a "refueling time period," doing outdoor activities to engage kids in therapeutic conversation and skill-building. Other therapists take advantage of Cleveland's beautiful nature centers with walking trails and green space. By taking kids away from the chaos that often surrounds their home life in the summer, our therapists help them appreciate nature and teach them to practice mindfulness.

Karen Gallagher, a school-based therapist in North Olmsted, helps some of her older clients get library cards to check out movies or books to broaden their interests and teach responsibility. Some clients use library materials to plan a movie night as a way of bonding with their family.

Unfortunately, because many of Beech Brook's clients live in poverty, it can be a challenge for parents to feed their children three meals a day during the summer. When our community-based staff meet with the children each week, they will often take them to the free lunch sites spread throughout Cuyahoga County – a benefit for the entire family.

Kelly Kimble, program director at Orange Schools, likes to find opportunities for her kids to volunteer throughout the summer. By setting up these opportunities, such as helping at a local garage sale or maintaining a plot at a community garden, the kids are learning the value of service and giving back to their community.

Time in the outdoors and a little creativity from our staff goes a long way toward maintaining a healthy therapeutic relationship with the children during the summer. And the school-based staff at Beech Brook remain just as dedicated to their clients as they are throughout the school year!

Introducing the new Beech Brook Emerging Leaders Board!

We're happy to announce the formation of our new Emerging Leaders Board.

The members are rising young professionals with a strong interest and commitment to the work and mission of Beech Brook. They'll serve as ambassadors to raise awareness about Beech Brook in the community, build our Friends of Beech Brook group, and coordinate and support special events and other activities.

Welcome to the newest members of our Beech Brook Family!

Maura Jochum, President
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Senior Accountant, HW&Co



Beech Brook's team with Halle School leadership: (left to right) Tanaja Kidd, REACH; Diana Wallace, supervisor; Nicholas Scheibelhood, principal; Kim Gil, assistant principal; Keylan Crawford, REACH; Cesar Cuevas, dean of engagement; Toni Zingale, case manager therapist; and Nicole Donofrio, case manager therapist. Not pictured but part of the Beech Brook team are Grace Mullin, REACH, and Venezuela Robinson, therapeutic tutor.

Continued from cover

“My Aunt Diane was the hero of the family. She provided for me and my cousin, who was more like a sister to me...she helped my mother out financially and sent money for the prison commissary to my brothers who were there.”

Despite Aunt Diane’s heroic efforts to support Toni’s family, drugs were still destroying it, Toni says. Her mom suffered third degree burns while she was high and trying to burn wood in a fire pit. Another brother was in and out of prison.

And then, when Toni was 14, she watched as her aunt received the devastating call that her own daughter had died from a heroin overdose.

Against the odds, Toni managed to graduate from high school.

“We lived in such poverty that we couldn’t always afford school uniforms, but we couldn’t go to school without them.”

“When we’re born into an environment with addiction or criminal activity or poverty, it’s almost likely we will follow that pattern. I love working at Beech Brook because I have the power to tell children they have a future.”

At the first high school she attended, she couldn’t get there early enough to pass through the long line at the metal detectors and be on time for class. At one point she was suspended for five days for being late and for dress code violations.

“I almost failed,” she says, “and I knew I would if I stayed there.”

Fortunately for Toni, a transfer to Max Hayes High School saved the day. “It was such a positive experience. I met teachers who actually cared. It was wonderful.”

And the girl who had almost flunked out of 9th grade finished in the top 10 of her graduating class.

But at a time when there was truly something to celebrate, tragedy struck again.

“Right before I graduated high school, my Aunt Diane developed pancreatic cancer and died. On her death bed, I promised her I would be successful and never use drugs.

“She was the glue that held us all together,” Toni says. “She was so kind and supportive. Everyone counted on her.”

At 18, Toni chose to move back in with her mom rather than age out of the Cuyahoga Department of Children and Families Services system.

But she kept her promise to Aunt Diane.

With the true grit that defines her, Toni earned a scholarship and took advantage of the grant programs available to CMSD students to pay her way through college.

Today Toni is a licensed social worker and a school-based therapist at Beech Brook. In May, she completed an accelerated master's degree. She's also certified as a chemical dependency counselor assistant, and she worked as an intern for Beech Brook's ACT Team while she completed her master's degree.

She also remains the only member of her extended family – siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins – who has never been addicted to drugs or imprisoned.

“I decided I could either use my childhood as an excuse or use it constructively.”

Today she works at Halle Elementary School in the heart of one of the poor neighborhoods where she grew up.

That's not by chance. When she came to work at Beech Brook, she told Jennifer Bruehler, senior director of community education, that she wanted to work with the kids in that neighborhood so that she could use her experience to help those families.

“Since I've been there, I've had so many kids share stories that are so familiar. I let the child and family know that this is my neighborhood...that I grew up here. I want them to understand that I understand.”

She also likes to ask her kids what she calls her miracle question: “When things are in your hands, what will your life look like? I tell them they can be anything they want to be.”

“I am a social worker because I understand the hardships in my city. Like all the children we service, I love my family very much, regardless if they are right or wrong. My mother, brother and sister have a disease, and my oldest brother has a mental illness. It doesn't justify their actions, but it helps explain it. They are loving, caring, goofy and funny people who have feelings, just like our clients and their families. The children in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District have so many things going on at home that we cannot even think of.

“When we're born into an environment with addiction or criminal activity or poverty, it's almost likely we will follow that pattern. I love working at Beech Brook because I have the power to tell children they have a future. And in the meantime, I can explore with them different coping skills. I will not let them feel alone.

“This is just my story. Imagine theirs.”



St Clair Orphanage

Generations later, Beech Brook's impact continues

From time to time, especially in these days of Ancestry.com, we receive inquiries from people hoping to find information about their ancestors who had been placed at the Cleveland Orphan Asylum, forerunner of Beech Brook. Still others, now in their 80s and 90s, come seeking information and answers about their own childhoods at Beech Brook.

Although life was not easy for these children, and many continued to struggle with their trauma as adults, we are grateful to hear from their descendants that the cycle of abuse and neglect was broken, and they went on to raise stable families of their own.

Here's just one recent example about a child placed in 1909.

Thank you for sending Helen's history to me. I have read it several times and am still trying to absorb the sad and tragic lives the Diehl children endured. Despite my grandfather's childhood circumstances, I can testify to the fact that the human spirit prevails. He was a devoted family man, kind and generous, loved by his family, including two great-grandchildren that he doted over.

Helen's story will remain with me forever, and I am grateful she was rescued from such an environment and taken under the Cleveland Asylum's wing. Sadly, she died at the young age of 26 of pulmonary tuberculosis, followed 10 years later by her brother Henry, 37, also of TB.

Thank goodness we had organizations such as Cleveland Orphan Asylum and now Beech Brook that are dedicated to the welfare and happiness of our youth. I shall put a check in the mail tomorrow.

*My Very Best,
Linda Wilson*



25
years
BEECH BALL

It's hard to believe it's been 25 years since our first Beech Ball in 1994! We celebrated our Silver Anniversary on May 10 with a party at Tenk West Bank in the Flats. Thank you to our Honorary Chairs Cindy and Ed Crotty, our Co-Chairs Tracy and David Crandall, Jennifer Pinkerton, and Jane and Gary Small, and to all our sponsors and guests who turned out to show their support for Beech Brook's mission of helping children and families thrive!



Jeremy and Katie Clark with Jim and Kathy Pender



Honorary Chairs Cindy and Ed Crotty



Terry and Edda Owen, Michele Ridella, Linda Cabill and Scott Fischer



Beech Brook Board Chair Brandon Miller



Georganne and Roy Radigan with Ryan and Amanda Miller



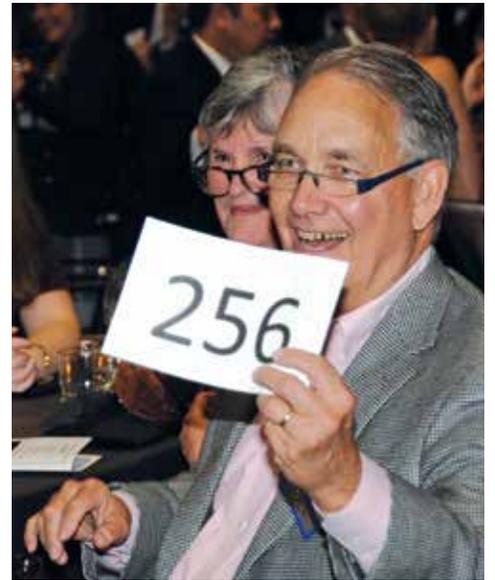
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Beech Brook's Mission

Helping children and families thrive by promoting healthy child development, strengthening the ability to overcome adversity, and enhancing family health and stability.

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Beech Brook is a contract agency of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County.



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