



For October's Meet-the-Board, we get to hear from our current OHCFR Board President, [Carmen Irving](#)! Carmen joined the board in 2011 as a Graduate Student Representative and served for two years in that role, and then became a New Professional representative and served in that capacity for five years. This is her first year as President (a two-year term). Read on to learn more about what drives her passion for family science and how she manages to connect with her family while working hard at her job (and for OHCFR!). Thank you for all you do, Carmen!

How long have you been working in family science or a family-related field, and in what role(s)?

"I have been working in the field of family science for twenty years (gosh, that makes me feel old!). I started my career in direct-

service working with high-risk youth and vulnerable families. After working in the field for more than ten years I wanted to be able to make a difference at the system level. It was this work that led me to pursue my Master's degree in Human Development and Family Science at Kent State University. In my graduate work I focused on adolescence and positive youth development. My graduate studies honed my ability to think in terms of systems of care and understanding the nuances of the human ecological model. The combination of my educational training and practical work experiences situated me for my position with Ohio State University Extension. During my time with OSU I was able to work with families in an education setting as well as work with educators to implement evidence-based programs in the community.

I am currently employed by the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Union County and serve as the Systems of Care Director. In this role I give oversight to the multiple systems that interface with Union County families. I see to it that there are processes in place to match services with the diverse needs of families, particularly youth."

What got you into family work?

"I took my first Family Science class as an elective at Miami University with Dr. Ann Bailey. I was absolutely fascinated. I knew from that introductory class that this was the career path for me. I was a child who endured many adverse experiences—it was important to me to have an impact in preventing these experiences and creating opportunities for positive youth development for all kiddos."

What are some of your current projects?

"One of my most recent projects has been training parents, youth workers, and community members in the evidence-based *Kernels for Life*. This training teaches adults how to use evidence-based strategies to teach children to regulate their own behaviors leading to long-term positive outcomes. I have trained over 700 adults in just under a year—it has been exhilarating to see so many adults committed to making a difference for the community's youth!" Learn more about *Kernels for Life* at <https://www.mhrbuc.org/kernels-for-life>

What do you like to do outside of work?

"My husband, Mike, and I have been married for 16 years and have two children-- a 15 year old son, Nick, and a 13 year old daughter, Madeline. As a family we enjoy hiking, working in the yard, spending a day at Gem Beach (Lake Erie) or playing board games (*Ticket to Ride* is our favorite). A couple of years ago we were fortunate enough to purchase my grandparent's lake house on Catawba Island. The four of us often spend our weekends working to restore the home (A family that sweats together, stays together!).

I have recently renewed an old interest of mine—cycling. As a personal wellness goal I cycle about 100 miles a week. I find that cycling is a great way for me to manage my Lupus as well as clear my mind. Next spring, my Uncle Bob and I plan to ride our bikes from the Ohio River to Lake Erie (I promise to post some pictures along the way)."

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself, your work, or your family?

"I have been blessed to be able to work in a field that I am passionate about and that continually contributes to personal growth. One of the greatest strengths of my work is that I have been able to manage work-life balance and continue to develop my professional interests while tending to my marriage and family. I do hope to pursue my doctoral degree in the future but two teenagers currently have the bulk of my attention!"