

Betsie Norris

Executive Director



Betsie Norris is the Founder and Executive Director of Adoption Network Cleveland: The Ohio Family Connection. She founded the organization in 1988, was a volunteer for the first seven years, and has been the Executive Director since 1995. Betsie is an adoptee who searched for and was reunited with her birthparents in 1986, when she was in her mid-20s.

With a wide array of programs and services, Adoption Network Cleveland has been recognized nationally as a successful model for effective service and advocacy for members of the formal and informal (kinship) adoption community including adoptees, adoptive/kinship families, birthparents, youth in foster care and related professionals. Adoption Network Cleveland served as the lead agency of the Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids Initiative, which was responsible for reducing the numbers of youth waiting for adoption in Cuyahoga County foster care from 1,700 in 2004 to approximately 500 today. The organization now serves people throughout Ohio and beyond.

Betsie has worked tirelessly on legislation to reform Ohio's adoption laws and as a result 400,000 adoptees adopted in Ohio's formerly "closed" period from 1964-1996 have access to their original birth certificates, effective March 2015. The story of her involvement is highlighted in the short documentary *An Adoptee ROARed in Ohio: The Betsie Norris Story* by Jean Strauss, which debuted at the Cleveland International Film Festival in 2014.

Betsie is co-author with Jayne Schooler of *Journeys After Adoption: Understanding the Lifelong Process* (Bergin & Garvey, 2002). Prior to her work in adoption and child welfare, Betsie worked as an RN in child psychiatry. She has served on the board of the American Adoption Congress (1997-1999) and the Donaldson Adoption Institute (2015-2017). Betsie is a member of the Leadership Cleveland Class of 2012.

Under her leadership, Adoption Network Cleveland received various awards:

- North American Council on Adoptable Children **2014 Parent Group of the Year Award**
- Voice for Adoption **2012 Drenda Lakin Memorial Award** for Continuing Services to Adoptive Families
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services **2009 Adoption Excellence Award**
- The Center for Community Solutions **2005 Anisfeld-Wolf Memorial Award**, which recognizes non-profit community organizations for outstanding service; the award fund is held by the Cleveland Foundation

Betsie Norris is available as a resource to speak or be interviewed on any adoption-related topic.

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CELEBRATING THREE DECADES
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY • 1988-2018
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Awards & Honors

2015 The Eleanor R. Gerson Leadership in Social Justice Award from Greater Cleveland Community Shares

2015 Virginia Colson Award for Service to Families and Children from the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies: OACCA

2014 Advocate of the Year Award from the Ohio Adoption Planning Group

2013 recognized by the Ohio House and Senate during official session after successfully leading the effort to change Ohio adoption records laws

2013 Pillar Award for Community Service "Executive Director of the Year" from Medical Mutual and Smart Business Magazine

2012 Champion Award from the National Center for Adoption Law and Policy

2012 Class: Leadership Cleveland

2011 Adoption Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

2009 Foster Care Hero Award from the Rona R. Carter Scholarship Fund

2005 Hearts of Hope Award from Beech Brook

2005 Angels in Adoption Award from the U.S. Congress

2005 Woman of Note from Crains Cleveland Business

2004 Emma Mae Vilardi Humanitarian Award from the American Adoption Congress



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