

## Legacy Award

This nominee deserves the Legacy Award for the many attributes that they have contributed to the Paulding County Community. I first became aware of this individual's talents when they were a volunteer for the youth soccer program that the Kiwanis Club was sponsoring. Upon official membership to Kiwanis, it soon became evident that they had many more skills to share. They stepped up to the needs of the Kiwanis Board and have even served in the President role. This individual was also involved in the Hands of Hope Pregnancy Services for Paulding County as a board member, where they agreed to be a Teen Advocate. In this role, they shared programs in all three of the county schools in a variety of methods as agreed by the various schools' administrations. Although recently other responsibilities meant they had to give up this duty, their knowledge of the school districts helped prepare them for future programs. However, the most valuable and long-lasting influence that they have achieved in just the last couple of years, leaving a very valuable legacy to future generations of Paulding County is their desire to bring forth the Bible pull-out programs, known as Lifewise Academy in all three county schools. Their involvement in the original steering committee started with getting a program started in the Paulding School District. Their leadership and ability to inspire others resulted in a Lifewise Academy Board being created and a program offered, and a location found to serve Paulding Elementary. Soon a program and location was also available at the Oakwood School Elementary, as well. Next to be certain the program would be a success, they agreed to serve as the Executive Director for Paulding's program. Because of their leadership skills and ability to inspire others, they agreed to combine efforts and serve as head of the Wayne Trace Schools Lifewise Academy too. This included off-site locations near the Payne Elementary and Grover Hill Elementary Schools. Through their community involvement, they were able to successfully find more convenient locations to hold these sessions and reduce the time and distance for students to reach the classroom programs. As a result, an additional board, the Paulding Character Academy, was created to serve as a fundraiser for purchasing and constructing facilities as needed for the students. In addition, Antwerp Schools have now started a Lifewise Academy with this individual also serving as its director. Lifewise Academy at Paulding and Wayne Trace School systems has been so successful, students are asking for the "next step" once they have finished the elementary programs. So now facilities and programming are being developed to serve beyond elementary to middle school or junior high age groups. Obviously, this person was asked and was willing to serve as Executive Director for all three schools. They have shown how one individual's dedication to a cause has accomplished much for their community. They have also shown their innovation in figuring out how to make Lifewise Academy happen. First in getting the dedication of other community leaders, achieving cooperation with the school administration, and lastly finding quality facilities and locations to let Paulding County Youth know that the community cares about their physical, mental, and most importantly, spiritual health. This individual not only demonstrates their concern for the next generation by being involved in the many programs listed above, but also as a "home school" parent in providing the best education that they can for their children. Their belief in and dedication to the Lifewise Academy alone will leave a lasting legacy to Paulding County.

The 2023 Legacy Award recipient is Traci Koenig. Congratulations!