

WITNESS BIOGRAPHY

Matt Kakabeeke

Executive Director, Kalamazoo Optimist Hockey Association

Matt Kakabeeke serves as the Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Optimist Hockey Association (KOHA), where he provides strategic leadership and operational oversight for one of Michigan's largest youth hockey organizations, serving more than 700 participants annually. Prior to assuming the Executive Director role, he served as KOHA's Hockey Director, leading player development initiatives, coaching education, and hockey operations. Today, he oversees all aspects of the organization, including player development, coaching, operations, financial management, community partnerships, fundraising, and organizational growth, while advocating for affordable and accessible youth sports opportunities.

Matt also serves as the USA Hockey Coach-in-Chief for Michigan, providing statewide leadership for coach education, mentoring, and player development initiatives. In this role, he works with coaches, associations, and hockey leaders throughout the state to advance coaching excellence and promote USA Hockey's long-term athlete development principles.

Prior to joining KOHA, Matt spent more than 21 years with the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, retiring in 2021. During his federal career, he held several leadership positions involving organizational management, strategic planning, staff development, and the implementation of evidence-based practices. He also served as faculty for the Federal Judicial Center and received the Michael Nissen Officer of the Year Award and the Frederic Milton Thrasher Award for Superior Accomplishment.

Matt earned a Master of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and Political Science from Western Michigan University. Throughout his career in both public service and youth athletics, he has remained committed to leadership, mentorship, and creating positive opportunities for young people and their communities.

Matt and his wife, Heather, have been married for 24 years and reside in Portage, Michigan. They are the proud parents of three children: Olivia (21), a student at Miami University; Evan (18), who will attend Xavier University in the fall; and Avery (8).