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Akron Municipal Court

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JUDGE ANNALISA S. WILLIAMS TO RECEIVE THE KENT STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION'S DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD FOR 2020

Akron, Ohio, June 11, 2020 – Akron Municipal Court Judge Annalisa S. Williams has been chosen as the Kent State University Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award recipient for 2020. The Distinguished Alumni Award honors exceptional alumni who have made outstanding contributions in their chosen profession and demonstrated extraordinary service to their community.

Judge Williams, who earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Kent State University in 1977, was first elected to the Akron Municipal Court in 2003. She received a master's degree in Urban Studies and Juris Doctorate from the School of Law, both from the University of Akron. Before joining the Akron Municipal Court, Judge Williams was an Assistant Director of Law, Domestic Relations Referee and worked in private practice within the areas of criminal, probate, juvenile, domestic relations and bankruptcy law.

She has presided over the court's mental health docket since 2005, receiving national recognition for her involvement. Due in large part to her work, the Akron Municipal Mental Health Court is designated as one of five original learning sites by the Bureau of Justice and Assistance and the Council of State Governments.

"I am honored and delighted to receive this award from my alma mater," said Judge Williams. "My time at Kent State University shaped who I am today. I cherish my memories of Kent State and am especially proud that I was an Upward Bound program participant. It was in Upward Bound where I learned the importance of relationships, hard work and perseverance."

Judge Williams is a trustee of the Ohio Judicial College and a member of the Ohio Supreme Court Commission on Specialized Dockets.

Judge Williams is extremely passionate about addressing mental health issues and diminishing the stigma sometimes associated with mental illness. She started the Peace of Mind Probation Program in 2015 after seeing an epidemic of female offenders cycling in and out of the criminal justice system. The program provides a forum for female defendants on probation to develop healthy coping skills and address issues such as depression and anxiety. It aims to help participants change their thinking processes in order to change their reaction to life events and lessen their risk of reoffending. Since its inception, Peace of Mind has had more than 50 graduates.

In 2018, Peace of Mind was awarded the Judicial Administration and Legal Reform Committee Innovative Court Practices Award from the Ohio State Bar Association. The purpose of the Innovative Court Practices Award is to bring greater visibility to exemplary programs in Ohio's courts and to facilitate the transfer of those programs to other courts in the state. Nominees are evaluated on criteria including creativity, the newness of the program and its effectiveness, as well as the transferability of the concept to other courts and whether the program addresses significant issues that are regional in scope.

Earlier this year, Judge Williams was recognized with the Akron Bar Association's Diversity Award for her commitment to diversity and inclusion in Summit County. In November 2017, Kent State University also honored Judge Williams with the Dr. Daniel Mahony Award for Social Responsibility during their annual Harambee Awards celebration.

Judge Williams has served on numerous nonprofit and civic boards throughout her career. Presently she serves on the Project GRAD Akron Board of Directors and the Minerva Fund of Akron Board of Directors. She is an active volunteer with the Akron-based food pantry Sarah's House and the Akron-Canton Barristers Association. She is also a lifetime member of the NAACP, a lifetime member of Girl Scouts of America, a lifetime certified Bridges out of Poverty Trainer and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

She and her husband reside in Akron and have two adult children.

Event details for the Kent State University Alumni Association's 2020 Alumni Awards Ceremony will be announced at a later date.

The Akron Municipal Court serves the cities of Akron and Fairlawn; the townships of Bath, Richfield and Springfield; the Villages of Lakemore and Richfield; and that part of Mogadore in Summit County, Ohio. For more information about Akron Municipal Court services and programs, please visit: <https://www.akronmunicipalcourt.org>

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