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Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation Benefit honors Judge Katie O'Malley, Judge Marielsa Bernard, Community Outreach Executive Judith Clark, and GEICO Philanthropic Foundation

On Sunday October 2, 2011, the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation celebrates its 2nd annual benefit at the Hilton Rockville, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland to support the vital work of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center, which opened in 2009 in Rockville, Maryland as part of an international network of more than 60 family-friendly centers that provide victims of domestic violence and their children essential services all under one roof—from care to court—at no charge. Since its opening, the Center has served nearly 3000 people from more than 100 countries of origin. The facility houses everything from *pro bono* legal support and law enforcement to emergency services, counseling and help obtaining protective orders. Before the Center's existence, victims would be referred to as many as 20 different agencies in separate locations throughout the county. The Benefit is being chaired by Catherine Leggett and honors the following award recipients:

JUDGE KATIE O'MALLEY (*Forerunner Award recipient*) is a former prosecutor who handled countless domestic violence and child sexual and physical abuse cases. She is currently Associate Judge of the District Court of Baltimore City and Maryland's First Lady. Judge O'Malley continues to be a steadfast advocate for the rights of victims of domestic violence. For years, she has served in the fight to end domestic violence, participating in several House of Ruth functions and giving lectures both in Maryland and overseas. In March 2009, Judge O'Malley spoke in Washington, DC as a guest of the U.S. State Department on women's rights in America and domestic violence. In Maryland, Judge O'Malley joined Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown to support and successfully pass legislation to remove firearms from the hands of domestic abusers. She continues to visit public and private schools, colleges and universities, and organizations around the state to promote domestic violence awareness for all families and children.

JUDGE MARIELSA BERNARD (*Inspiring Leader Award recipient*) is an Associate Judge in the Circuit Court of Montgomery County. She has chaired the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council from 2006-2009, guided its development, and remains actively involved.

Through the DVCC Judge Bernard proposed and developed two initiatives, the Fatherhood Conference to strengthen families and father involvement, which received an award at the NPCL 11th Annual International Fatherhood Conference, and the Choose Respect Montgomery Conference to address healthy teen dating relationships. As a member of the Public Trust and Confidence in the Maryland Judicial System Committee, she initiated three Public Forums on domestic violence. She also initiated and continues to run the National Association of Women Judges Storybook Project in the Jessup Maryland Correctional Institution for Women that assists incarcerated mothers in reading and recording stories for their children to maintain the bond between mother and child. Judge Bernard's work on behalf of positive empowerment of area youth of all ethnicities, families, and gang prevention is legendary in the community.

JUDITH CLARK (*Marilyn J. Praisner Founders Award recipient*) is Founder and Executive Director of Women Who Care Ministries, a nonprofit organization that helps people in need through program areas including domestic violence; individuals overcoming homelessness and substance abuse; life skills workshops, a girls mentoring group; Helping Others Eat Food for Families program; and its signature program, Helping Kids Eat Backpack Weekend Food Program that every Friday provides more than 600 backpacks filled with kid-friendly nutritious food items to children in elementary and middle school to ensure they won't go hungry over the weekend.

GEICO PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATION (*Corporate Legacy Award Recipient*) is a committed community partner in Montgomery County and has an ongoing relationship of support and understanding for the needs of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center. GEICO supports the Foundation in its overall mission to provide for the safety and well being of the community-at-large.

Also taking place at the Benefit, Chair Catherine Leggett will announce the naming of the family room at the Family Justice Center as a **tribute to Judge James Stephen McAuliffe, Jr.** who passed away April 30, 2011. To honor his commitment to reducing domestic violence, his family designated the Family Justice Center as a beneficiary for memorial donations, which resulted in a tremendous outpouring from those whose lives he touched, The Family Justice Center will hold a special naming ceremony in November "**In Celebration of the Life of Judge James Stephen McAuliffe and His Love of Children**" at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center, 600 Jefferson Plaza, in Rockville, MD.

Last year's Family Justice Center Foundation Benefit honorees were Vice President Joseph R. Biden, County Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg, Resa Levy, and Verizon Wireless. **For information**

about Benefit sponsorships and ongoing contributions, e-mail mcfjcfoundation@yahoo.com, visit the Foundation's website at www.mcfjcfoundation.org or contact Resa Levy, Foundation Executive Director, at 301-509-6832.

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