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**AWARDS HONOR EXCEPTIONAL WORK
IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM**

CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO – “The compassionate work of the individuals and programs we will honor is truly inspiring,” remarked Eugenia Cash, Board Chair, as she spoke about the recipients of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County annual awards. The awards will be presented during the Board’s Annual Meeting on Monday, May 18, 2015. “Their extraordinary contributions are helping children and adults with mental illness and addictions on their path to recovery.”

William M. Denihan, Chief Executive Officer, noted that “The actions of each of our recipients are helping to alleviate the stigma that is still too often associated with mental illness and addictions. Their achievements embody what community treatment and recovery support is all about.”

The award recipients are:

- **Mental Health Professional of the Year - Leslie M. Koblentz, JD, MD, Director of the St. Vincent Charity Hospital Psychiatric Emergency Department, psychiatrist for the Cuyahoga County Jail and MetroHealth Hospital**, for dedicating her career to the public mental health system and her outstanding ability to collaborate with various systems to ensure that people living with mental illness receive the best treatment and recovery supports available.
- **Addiction Treatment Professional of the Year – Greg Uhland, LISW-S, Executive Director of ORCA House** for being a leader in the community addiction treatment system and utilizing his direct service background and management skills to ensure that ORCA House remains an asset to the community and the people it serves through a strategic partnership with Connections: Health• Wellness• Advocacy.
- **Legislator of the Year: Local Level – Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Yvonne M. Conwell** for her continued support of the mental health and addiction community, especially for organizing and hosting the three-part heroin summit for youth at Glenville High School to address the heroin epidemic among youth in our community.
- **Legislator of the Year Award: State Level – State Senator Tom Patton** for his continued support of the mental health and addiction treatment community, especially for defending our position regarding legislation and funding to ensure continued treatment and recovery support services are available to the residents of Cuyahoga County and all of Ohio.
- **Legislator of the Year Award: Federal Level – Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge** for introducing The Breaking Addiction Act of 2014 aimed at increasing community treatment options for heroin and other substance abuse, and for reintroducing the Act this year which is designed to address a significant barrier to accessing inpatient addiction treatment by waiving the Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion that would allow treatment facilities to have more than 16 beds.

- **Consumer/Client Involvement Award – (Recipient 1 through 4) Jeff K., Traci B., Breanna J. and Allison P.**, for their dedication and time spent over the past year sharing their recovery stories with students, employers and employees, conference attendees, the media, and the legislature to let people know the dangers of heroin and that there is hope for recovery. Their high energy, knowledge, and willingness to help prevent addiction are greatly appreciated.

(Recipient 5) Craig S. II, for his volunteer work on the ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County community Faith-based Outreach Sub-Committee, volunteering for NAMI Greater Cleveland, as well as his willingness to openly share his experiences of living with mental illness to help others and their families.

- **Family Involvement Award - Beth Elersich** for her volunteer efforts that ensure that families dealing with a mental illness have all of the resources available to them, leading NAMI Greater Cleveland Family to Family and the Understanding Mental Illness programs and running a support group.
- **Community Partner Collaboration Award – Luis Vazquez, Program Director for the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry** for his dedication to ensuring that people living with mental illness and/or addictions who have been incarcerated are prepared to leave jail with the proper resources needed to succeed in the community and for his efforts on the Greater Cleveland Reentry Leadership Coalition and his passion exhibited through his daily work.
- **Faith-based Involvement Award: Rev. Benjamin F. Gohlstin, Sr.**, for his forethought and outstanding leadership in ensuring that the ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County and the community understand the relationship between spirituality and the recovery process and advocating for the development of the Board's Faith-based Outreach Committee and its former community sub-committee.
- **Contract Agency Collaboration – (Recipient 1) Bert Rahl, MSSA, LISW-S, Director of Mental Health Services for Eldercare Services Institute** for ensuring that the elderly residents of Cuyahoga County are receiving specialized mental health services, not only at his agency, but throughout the county through his collaboration and contributions to the Council of Agency Directors, the Suicide Prevention Task Force, the Hoarding Connection, the Adult Protective Services Steering Committee and the Mental Health Advocacy Committee.

(Recipient 2) Gregory Popovich, Court Administrator for the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court for taking extra steps to ensure that people living with mental illness and/or addictions are referred for treatment instead of incarceration - when appropriate. His involvement with the Court of Common Pleas Correction Panning Board and the Court Psychiatric Clinic, in addition to his efforts on the Community Based Correctional Facility Governing Board and the Governance Committee is exceptional. Greg wanted to express that this award is for the entire court, because the work is truly a team effort of all of the judges and staff.

- **Media Award - Brandon Blackwell, Northeast Ohio Media Group** for his in-depth, fair and accurate reporting of the unfortunate death of a person living with mental illness, the Department of Justice Report concerning the Cleveland Division of Police, the Mental Health Task Force recommendations to the Department of Justice, and the benefits of Crisis Intervention Team training.

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Interviews can be arranged by calling Scott Osiecki at (216) 215-3599.