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LiveSafe Resources Hosts 40th Annual Tribute to Achievement, Recognizing 2025 Woman of the Year and Award Recipients

MARIETTA, GA, March 21, 2025 – LiveSafe Resources hosted the **40th Annual Tribute to Achievement** on Friday evening at the Atlanta Marriott Northwest at Galleria. More than 450 guests gathered to honor 15 exceptional women from across metro Atlanta, each selected for induction into the organization’s prestigious Academy of Women Leaders. **Judy Fitzgerald**, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia’s Children, was **named the 2025 Woman of the Year**.

The 2025 Woman of the Year award was presented to Fitzgerald by Marietta attorney **Joy Doss**, the 2024 Woman of the Year. **Allison Giddens**, Board Chair of LiveSafe Resources, praised Fitzgerald as a purpose-driven leader who brings energy and optimism to her endeavors. “On behalf of LiveSafe Resources, I am proud to present this award to Judy in recognition of her servant-leadership and efforts that have positively impacted the lives of women, children and all Georgia citizens,” said Giddens.

Judy Fitzgerald’s career spans over 25 years of experience in health and human services, with a strong track record of compassionate and strategic leadership. A social worker by trade, she currently serves as Executive Director of Voices for Georgia’s Children, leading its strategic vision. Previously, she was Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) from 2016 to 2022, where she spearheaded transformative initiatives and navigated budget challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her career also includes leadership roles at the National Mental Health Association of Georgia, View Point Health, The Carter Center Mental Health Program, and Mercy Care. A University of Georgia MSW graduate, Judy began her career advocating for mental health policy alongside former First Lady Rosalynn Carter. She currently serves on the boards of the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC) and the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers.

The fifteen honorees for this year’s Tribute to Achievement award were nominated by their peers and exemplify outstanding leadership across their personal, professional, and volunteer endeavors. These remarkable women join a distinguished group of more than 600 past

honorees, recognized over the past 39 years as members of the Academy of Women Leaders. This prestigious group represents individuals who have made significant contributions to their professions and communities.

The 2025 honorees include:

- **Angela Blank**, Community Advocate & Volunteer
- **Edith Boy**, Financial Advisor, Edward Jones
- **Charisse Braxton**, Sr. Director Clinical Operations, Kaiser Permanente of Georgia
- **Sandra Butler**, CEO and Founder, Advanced Skin Care
- **Kimberly Carroll**, Deputy Court Administrator, Cobb County Superior Court Administration
- **Cassy Ferrell**, Senior Vice President, Treasury Operations, Georgia's Own Credit Union
- **Judy Fitzgerald**, Executive Director, Voices for Georgia's Children
- **Kate Gaffney**, Director of Pro Bono, Atlanta Legal Aid Society
- **Rachel Harmon**, Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science, Oxford College of Emory University
- **Jessica Lee**, Director of Ticket Operations, Atlanta Braves & Truist Park
- **Freda Lyon**, Vice President of Emergency Services, Wellstar Health System
- **Betsy Madrerohon**, Vice President, Commercial Banker, Capital City Bank
- **Ashley Palmer**, Judge, State Court of Cobb County
- **Jennifer Stanley**, Physician Liaison, Northside Hospital
- **Heather Walker**, Chief Deputy, Cobb County Tax Commissioner's Office

“We are honored to recognize these exceptional women for their leadership and service to our community,” said **Lisa Mello**, CEO of LiveSafe Resources. “Thanks to the power of community partnerships and support, LiveSafe Resources can provide survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault with the safety, resources, and guidance they need to rebuild their lives. Together, we are driving generational change, and that wouldn't be possible without the dedication of leaders like these outstanding honorees.”

This year's **Pat Head Dignity Award** was presented to **the family of fallen Paulding County Sheriff's Deputy Brandon Cunningham**, whose life was tragically cut short while responding to a domestic dispute call in August 2024. Deputy Cunningham is remembered as the kind of

officer every department hopes to have—dedicated, reliable, and always willing to help, embodying the principle of 'Doing the Right Thing.' His unwavering commitment to serving and protecting his community epitomized selflessness and the core values of the Pat Head Dignity Award.

The **Kim Gresh Survivor's Award** honors the incredible strength and resilience of abuse and assault survivors everywhere. This year's award was presented to **Karly Kowalski**, a domestic violence survivor and former LiveSafe Resources client. This award recognizes her remarkable journey from leaving an abusive relationship to building an independent life, becoming a successful business leader, and creating a better future for herself and her children. Tribute to Achievement supports LiveSafe Resources in its mission to provide safety and healing for those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault.

The evening was emceed by **Condace Pressley**, Director of Community and Public Affairs at WSB-TV, Atlanta, and Cox Media Group, while **Justin O'Dell** of O'Dell, O'Neil, Hungerford, Blanchard served as the auctioneer. Guests enjoyed entertainment by the **Whitefield Academy Jazz Band**.

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About LiveSafe Resources

LiveSafe Resources is dedicated to building a community free from domestic violence and sexual assault where we all live safely. For details on LiveSafe Resources' programs and services for victims, or how to be part of the solution, visit www.livesaferesources.org. For the 24-hour crisis line, call 770-427-3390.