



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Legal Services of Greater Miami Presented Equal Justice Leadership Awards to Three Trailblazers Committed to Access to Justice for All**

**Miami, FL** – October 4, 2021 - Legal Services of Greater Miami (Legal Services), the largest provider of broad-based civil legal services for low-income residents in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, virtually honored **distinguished Equal Justice Leaders of the South Florida Community** at the **12th Annual Heart of Giving Celebration and Judicial Reception**. Our **Celebrity Host, Neki Mohan**, served as Mistress of Ceremonies of the magnificent virtual event showcased on September 30, 2021.

These three (3) trailblazers were recognized as incredible leaders who have dedicated much of their lives to ensuring equal access to justice and opportunity:

- 2021 Equal Justice Leadership Award to **Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava**
- 2021 Equal Justice Judicial Leadership Award to the **Honorable Marcia G. Cooke**, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida
- Equal Justice Philanthropic Award Posthumously to **Jacqueline Allee Smith**

The **Heart of Giving Celebration** is an integral part of the Legal Services *“Together We Must” Campaign for Justice*. The Campaign, co-chaired by **Brigid Cech Samole** (Greenberg Traurig), **Jason Kellogg** (Levine, Kellogg, Lehman, Schneider + Grossman), and **Lilly Ann Sanchez** (The L-S Law Firm) was organized in 2009 **to raise awareness of the critical need for free civil legal services for vulnerable members of our community** and to raise funds for Legal Services to continue to address that need. **It celebrates leaders and philanthropists in our community who contribute to Legal Services’ mission and help in the fight for equal justice.**

“The past year has taught us the **importance of access to a safe place to call home as well as food, healthcare and an education, and we learned just how tenuous this access is for so many of our neighbors,**” said **Monica Vignes-Pitan, Executive Director** of Legal Services of Greater Miami. “Our advocacy keeps families in their homes, ensures healthcare coverage, provides additional income for food, and provides access to other essentials of personal safety and well-being. **For the last 55 years, our impact has only been possible because of the support from the community that enables us to deliver far reaching outcomes** for those who have no place else to turn.”

About 300 members of the legal and business community enjoyed two exceptional performances by **Nicole Henry**, one of the jazz world's most acclaimed vocalists. **Robert Fatovic**, EVP, Chief Legal Officer and Corporate Secretary of **Ryder System, the event’s Title Sponsor** shared a touching and poignant message confirming a multi-year gift in memory of Julie Azuaje, recently deceased Ryder counsel and 15-year Legal Services board member.

Other moments of the evening include a story by **Legal Services client, Army Veteran Felix Cepeda**, and special guest appearances by **Miami-Dade County Commissioner Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz**, and **R. Donahue Peebles**, Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Peebles Corporation.

Guests enjoyed the virtual presentation and raised funds during an online auction boasting a number of incredible items from categories in fashion, art, self-care, epicurean delights, travel and more; plus a magnificent **art exhibit curated by Susana Baker**, tagged **Murals of Humanity, "The Colors of Humanity"** which included many of our influential and impressive artisans in our South Florida community showcasing: **Ekaterina Abramova, Armando Colls, Max Jamali, Monique Lassooij, Lindsey Lux, and Diogo Snow**.

This event was a highly anticipated annual event, generously sponsored by nearly 70 companies and well attended by video celebration by the professional community, in support of Legal Services of Greater Miami. To view the HeART of Giving Celebration on demand, please visit [bit.ly/2021heartofgiving](https://bit.ly/2021heartofgiving).

#### **About Legal Services of Greater Miami**

Legal Services of Greater Miami is the largest provider of broad-based civil legal services for the poor in Miami-Dade and Monroe and is recognized in the state and in the nation as a model legal services program. In any given year, Legal Services provides services which benefits almost 20,000 vulnerable members of our community who have nowhere else to turn for help – women, children, seniors, veterans returning from combat, people with disabilities, low wage workers and the homeless--who have problems in the areas of tenants' rights, homeownership, health and income maintenance, employment, special education, tax and consumer rights. For more information, visit [www.legalservicesmiami.org](http://www.legalservicesmiami.org) and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#).

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