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FAYETTE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTOR AWARDED FOR EFFORTS

Uniontown, PA – More than one year after being named an honoree, Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration Chief Executive Officer Lisa Ferris has finally received her 2020 Dennis Marion Impact Award.

Established in honor of former Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' (DHS) Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services' (OMHSAS) Deputy Secretary Dennis Marion, the award recognizes local and state government employees whose initiatives, processes and projects have led to significant improvements in Pennsylvania's behavioral health service delivery system.

"Just like Dennis, you have demonstrated strong leadership, passion for public service and commitment to the people you serve," current OMHSAS Deputy Secretary Kristen Houser wrote to Ferris in her award letter. "Your contributions are not limited to the boundaries of a single county or agency, but like Dennis, you have bridged disparate missions and pushed toward the single goal of excellence in public service."

Ferris was slated to receive the award during a traditional ceremony in Harrisburg last year, but the event was canceled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. DHS representatives and Ferris both recently recorded their respective award presentation and acceptance videos for a virtual ceremony, to be held later this month.

"To be selected to receive this award out of 67 counties is just overwhelming for me. I'm very humbled and so proud of it," Ferris said. "Outside our county, people sometimes only focus on anything negative that might happen here, but those aren't reflective of Fayette County as a whole. We do great things here in Fayette, and this is the county's award just as much as it's mine. It takes much more than just one person to make the changes and do all the things that led to this award."

A lifelong Fayette County resident, Ferris earned her bachelor's degrees in psychology and rehabilitation from West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1985. Following a brief stint working for the Fayette Community Mental Health Center, she returned to school and obtained a masters of public administration degree from West Virginia University.

She began working for Fayette County in 1989 and, by 1994, was tapped to take over as county administrator of the Behavioral Health Administration and its new HealthChoices Program. Under Ferris' leadership, the program has successfully allowed for the reinvestment of millions of dollars back into community services and programs.

Ferris was previously honored with the 2008 Behavioral Health Best Practice Award for all of Western Pennsylvania, and has long been recognized for her dedication to collaborative and innovative approaches to various projects. She has also served on many committees and boards throughout her

tenure, including California University of Pennsylvania's Social Work Board and the Executive Board of the Miracle League of Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands.

Over the last 30 years, Ferris, who is also the first woman to hold the CEO position, has most enjoyed working directly with Fayette County's citizens.

"When I run into someone out in public and they tell me they had a positive outcome from our services - that's the best part of the job for me. I don't always get to see the fruits of our labor, but finding out later on that they're doing better and enjoying their lives and things the rest of us take for granted, that's the number one thing that matters," Ferris said. "It makes all the hard work we've put into creating new programs and contracting with great people all worth it for me. It's just a wonderful feeling, because I was born and raised here; so I was determined to come home after college and make Fayette County better somehow. I love the work, and it's never a dull moment."

Fayette County Commissioner Scott Dunn congratulated Ferris for receiving the award.

"It's always great to see our employees get recognition," he said.

Commissioner Vince Vicites said Ferris' decades of extensive experience working hard for the Behavioral Health Administration led to this accomplishment.

"She has earned this honor, and we are very proud that she's receiving this award," Vicites said.

Commissioner Chairman Dave Lohr said Ferris has a long history of service to Fayette County, and her dedication is noteworthy.

"How appropriate that she is receiving the recognition she deserves. With their focus on growth and recovery, Lisa and her staff are striving to provide the very best of services to those in need in our community," Lohr said. "For Lisa, it's not just about providing services, but improving quality of life for those who are served. Our community is fortunate to have someone with Lisa's skills and experience at the helm of our Behavioral Health Administration."

To learn more about the Dennis Marion Impact Award, visit www.dhs.pa.gov. To learn more about the Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration and its many services, www.fayettecountypa.org/264/Behavioral-Health.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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