

Press Release



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Champion of Change: Judge Mary Triggiano Reshaping Justice

Key points:

- Judge Mary Triggiano is the recipient of the 2024 Charles L. Goldberg Distinguished Service Award from the Wisconsin Law Foundation, the charitable arm of the State Bar of Wisconsin. She will receive her award at the Law Foundation's Fellows Dinner on Oct. 10 in Milwaukee.
- It took a powerful experience in a Wisconsin Prison System to convince Judge Triggiano of the vital need for restorative justice
- Restorative justice is an approach to addressing harm and conflict that focuses on healing and repairing relationships rather than simply punishing the offender. At its core, restorative justice emphasizes accountability, empathy, and making amends.

MADISON, WI - It was a transformative experience inside a Wisconsin prison in 2007 that set Mary Triggiano on a mission to reshape how justice is served. At the time, Judge Triggiano was a Milwaukee County Circuit Court judge, and the three-day restorative justice circle at Green Bay Correctional Institution forever changed her perspective. "Our justice system doesn't work for everyone. Some benefit, while others are left behind," said Triggiano, who recently stepped down from the bench after 19 years.

Judge Triggiano's introduction to restorative justice came under the mentorship of former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Janine Geske, a pioneer in the field. This powerful encounter at the prison deepened her conviction that the justice system needed a more compassionate, healing approach, both for victims and offenders. "Those who are harmed, as well as those who harm, aren't set up to heal and overcome their challenges after harm has occurred," Triggiano explained.

This driving belief led Triggiano to become the director of the Andrew Center for Restorative Justice at Marquette University Law School in 2023, succeeding Justice Geske. There, she teaches future legal professionals about trauma-informed care and restorative justice practices.

"Acknowledging harm and trauma is vital to healing and creating safer communities. We need to make the justice system more humane, equitable, and restorative," she said.

For her lifelong dedication to service, Judge Triggiano will be honored with the 2024 Charles L. Goldberg Distinguished Service Award from the Wisconsin Law Foundation, the charitable arm of the State Bar of Wisconsin, on Oct. 10, 2024, in Milwaukee. The award recognizes individuals who have shown an extraordinary commitment to the legal profession and the community.

Reflecting on her path to becoming a champion for restorative justice, Judge Triggiano traces her passion for law back to her upbringing. Influenced by her parents' values of service and her mentors' guidance, she pursued law to give back to her community. After graduating from U.W. Law School, her work on behalf of vulnerable clients further solidified her commitment to justice.

"Restorative justice is a uniquely human approach to addressing harm. It elevates the voices of those most affected, including victims, and fosters accountability in those responsible," Triggiano says. As she continues to lead the Andrew Center, she remains dedicated to advancing restorative practices and shaping the next generation of lawyers.

Judge Triggiano will receive her award on Oct. 10, 2024, at the Wisconsin Law Foundation's Fellows Dinner in Milwaukee, an event that celebrates those who have made a profound impact on the legal profession and the wider community.

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