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The Women’s Bar Association of the State of New York (WBASNY) is pleased to announce that the Honorable Joan Kohout has been selected by the New York State Bar Association’s (NYSBA) Committee on Women in the Law to receive their annual Ruth G. Schapiro Memorial Award.

WBASNY lauds the Committee’s recognition of Judge Kohout’s noteworthy contributions in addressing concerns of concern to women. Judge Kohout is a distinguished jurist currently serving on the Monroe County Family Court. She hails from the Greater Rochester Association of Women Attorneys (GRAWA), one of eighteen WBASNY chapters.

The Ruth G. Schapiro award recognizes a NYSBA member who has given priority to women’s issues; one who encourages leadership development, innovation and knowledge-sharing to enhance the status of women in professional and community settings. Judge Kohout embodies the very principles this award seeks to honor.

Judge Kohout, who is a founding member of GRAWA, was the first female attorney hired by the Monroe County Public Defender’s Office. During her tenure there, Judge Kohout served to mentor other female attorneys in their representation of women and girls involved in Family Court proceedings. Judge Kohout broke ground again in 1988 when she was appointed to the judiciary – she was the only female jurist on the Family Court Bench. In her capacity as Judge, she has had the opportunity to mentor women judges following in her footsteps as they too focus on the unique needs of family court litigants. Notably, Judge Kohout has been a leader in Family Court reform in New York State, demonstrating a special interest in the issues facing girls and the disproportionate minority representation in foster care and juvenile justice.

In her Community, Judge Kohout has concentrated efforts in assisting those suffering poverty and lack of education - disproportionately women. Through her volunteerism and work as a jurist, Judge Kohout consistently strives to foster equal opportunities for disadvantaged girls and women. Fittingly, Judge Kohout works with the YWCA of Rochester and Monroe Count, the mission of which is to eliminate racism and empower women. The YWCA provides extensive services for teenage girls as well as racial justice programs and housing. Judge Kohout remains an active member of the YWCA’s Racial Justice Committee.

Judge Kohout’s volunteer effort has focus significantly on access to justice and education. She serves as Dean of the Monroe County Bar Association's Law Academy and is the longest-standing judicial member of the Monroe Bar Association’s President’s Commission on Access to Justice.

For more than 30 years, Judge Kohout has served as an inspiring role model for women Monroe County community. Through her extraordinary intelligence, formidable leadership skills, mentoring initiatives, Judge Kohout has undoubtedly made her community a better place for girls and women to live.

"The entire WBASNY membership applauds the New York State Bar Association for selecting our candidate and highly-esteemed member, Judge Joan Kohout, for this most prestigious award," said WBASNY President Irene Villacci.

Judge Kohout will join the ranks of several other WBASNY members who have been honored with the Ruth G. Schapiro Award including the Hon. Judith Kaye (1992), Karen DeCrow (1998), and Kathleen Donelli (2013).

The award will be presented to Judge Kohout by the NYSBA President at the Association’s House of Delegates meeting on Friday, January 30, 2015 at the New York Hilton Midtown.