**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Victim Assistance Program Celebrates 50 years of flourishing in Summit County with Mardi Gras Gala**

**Join the Virtual Gala to raise $115,000 to support Victims of Crime and Trauma.**

Victim Assistance Program is hosting its 30th Annual Mardi Gras Gala on Saturday, March 5th 2022 virtually. Since Mardi Gras Gala’s inception 30 years ago, Gala proceeds have ensured essential services to victims of crime and trauma in Summit County. Ways to support this critical programming include ticket sales, sponsorships, raffles, live and silent auctions, as well as a direct ‘fund the mission’ segment called “Hardship to Healing.” Virtual tickets also include an exciting entry to win (2) tickets to ride the Goodyear Blimp this year.

Nicole Hagy, Community Outreach and Grant Coordinator for Akron Municipal Court, is serving as the Gala’s committee chair. Nicole, a Laura Allio Emerging Leader recipient and Secretary of the Board for Victim Assistance Program, says “This event is deeply rooted in the community, and we are excited to join the many virtual revelers as they celebrate from their home”. Attendants will enjoy a 50/50 Raffle, both silent and live auctions, a gourmet charcuterie and wine spread, and 50th anniversary celebration, with Lynn Kelly of WQMX serving as Master of Ceremonies.

Mardi Gras Gala is more than a fundraiser, but an opportunity to celebrate champions in our community. Last year Victim Assistance Program saw a 57% rise in crisis hotline calls and served over 4,500 individuals and families. Summit County Executive, Ilene Shapiro joined us in meeting that need and will be presented with the Bernard I. Rosen Community Service Award for her continued efforts towards safety for all Summit County residents.

We hope all can join us for a night of memories and revelries on our virtual Bourbon Street extravaganza.

Tickets, sponsorship, and more information can be found at https://victimassistanceprogram.org/mardigrasgala/

The mission of Victim Assistance Program is to empower our community to restore lives impacted by crisis, violence, and tragedy.  The purpose of the Agency is to provide 24-hour crisis intervention, advocacy, and education to victims of crime and trauma and the professional community who serves this population. To learn more about Victim Assistance Program’s services, and ways to get involved, visit victimassistanceprogram.org or call our 24-hour hotline, 330.376.0040.

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