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**For Immediate Release**

October 8, 2019

***Judge Amy Corrigall Jones, Summit County Valor Court***

***Hosts Summit County Witness Tree Awareness Event***

***for Local Veterans***

Summit County, Ohio: Summit County Valor Court, developed and led by Presiding Judge Amy Corrigall Jones, was established based on the recognition that many of our veterans return to civilian life with serious trauma both physical and mental, which has led to their involvement with the criminal justice system. By providing this court, veterans receive access to programs, treatment and interaction with mentors in a collaborative initiative to enhance chances of success.

In furtherance of the Valor Court mission and in conjunction with the upcoming Veterans Day holiday, Judge Amy Corrigall Jones is pleased to announce the Summit County Witness Tree Awareness Event.

The Witness Tree is a Warriors’ Journey Home & Compass ceremony with the purpose of raising community awareness of the estimated 22 veterans who commit suicide daily in our nation. Many veterans returning home do not arrive “all the way home.” As one veteran explained, “The most difficult part of deployment is coming home.” Warriors’ Journey Home: Listen – Speak – Heal, is dedicated to providing information and support for our veterans, their families, and the wider community to make the transition and transformation home.

Warriors’ Journey Home focuses on the unseen wounds of war and military service WJH welcomes veterans who served, along with their family members and friends who want to participate, in welcoming veterans home.

“I am honored to collaborate with Warriors’ Journey Home to provide this meaningful public awareness effort to draw attention to the problem of suicide by current and former military members,” stated Corrigall Jones.

For 11 days, John Schluep from Warriors’ Journey Home, will lead a special gathering to call attention to and raise awareness of the challenges many veterans face following military and combat service, all too often ending in a loss of precious life by suicide. Part of that awareness will be to ensure support organization contact information and suicide hotline information is readily available.

The ceremony will take place in the park area located off High Street, outside the Summit County Courthouse, at the same time each day for the first eleven days of November beginning at 8:00 a.m. The brief ceremony begins with an opening statement followed by 22 dog tags being hung from the Witness Tree to represent the 22 veteran suicides that occur each day. By Veteran’s Day, Monday, November 11, there will be 242 dog tags hanging from the Witness Tree.

The word “witness” means to bear testimony to the truth. The truth our veterans often live is kept in silence. The Witness Tree is a small sliver of light opening us to a wider truth; that we all bear responsibility for war and the need to walk with our veterans on their journey home. Warriors’ Journey Home is based in Northeast Ohio and was founded in 2013 as a Non-profit 501c3 organization.

“There is significance to the Witness Tree,” stated Schluep. “A witness tree begins its life like any other tree. It sprouts. It grows. And then it’s thrust into the spotlight, playing a part in a significant historic event. While they may look like ordinary trees, they have incredible stories to tell,” concluded Schleup.

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