

## **Adams Award Given to Kay Elkins-Elliott**

On February 21, 2020 TAM recognized the many contributions to the Texas Mediation Community by Kay Elkins-Elliott, a grande dame of mediation in the highest sense of the word. Kay was presented the Susanne C. Adams Award by Melissa Back McAlpine, 2019 President of TAM, following a tribute to Kay by JAMS Mediator and Arbitrator Cecilia H. Morgan.

Suzanne Mann Duvall, a good friend of Susanne Adams, once said, "Whether you know it or not, Susanne Adams is one of the biggest reasons ... why we are able to enjoy this [mediation] profession on the wide-scale basis we do. ...this profession did not exist, except in very esoteric circles, when Susanne Adams began devoting her life to it." Susanne began mediating in the 1970's; first in California and then in Texas. She firmly believed that mediation was far superior to litigation and fiercely held to her principles concerning mediation and its role in our litigious society. She was a pioneer in the mediation movement in Texas, a founding member of TAM, and a member of one of TAM's first Boards of Directors. She was also TAM President from 1988 to 1990.

This year's award recipient, Kay Elkins-Elliott, has devoted her life to dispute resolution, helping individuals listen to what Abraham Lincoln referred to as the "better angels of our nature" for 40 years through her mediation, teaching, mentoring, coaching, and leadership. She is a TMCA Credentialled Distinguished Mediator, who has had over 1300 hours of ADR training, and has brought more than 2,000 cases to successful resolution.

Kay began arbitrating in 1975, received her basic mediation training in 1980, and was active in providing ADR services throughout the 1980's. In 1990 she was named the ADR Coordinator for the Texas Wesleyan School of Law (now the Texas A&M School of Law) and began the phase of her illustrious career for which she is best known, ADR education. In addition to her work at the law school, she has been a mediation trainer for the University of North Texas, University of Texas at Arlington, Midwestern State University, Texas Wesleyan University, and others.

Since 1997 she has taught conflict resolution, basic and advanced mediation, and solution-focused collaboration at Texas Woman's University. She has also coached 6 Texas Wesleyan University/ Texas A&M University Law School ADR Teams for many years. Winning multiple regional, national, and international competition championships, and helping Texas A&M University School of Law place in the top 10 in the American Bar Association's Competitions Championship in both 2018 and 2019.

Kay has authored, co-authored, or co-edited numerous ADR articles and books, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *State Bar of Texas ADR Handbook*. She is also a frequent contributor to the TAM Newsletter, *The Texas Mediator*.

Her letter of nomination from Jane Stephenson speaks of Kay's passion for dispute resolution and her willingness to mentor both fellow ADR practitioners and novices in the field. Prof. Nancy Welsh, Director of the Texas A&M School of Law Dispute Resolution Program says, "We are so lucky that Kay is part of Texas A&M's Dispute Resolution Program. She has played a major role in the spread of mediation in Texas and in our law school's commitment to the field of dispute resolution. Her dedication to our students is outstanding. So many of our alums and current students speak very highly of the role she has played in their professional development."

Over the years the Susanne C. Adams Award has come to mean more than a recognition of "exceptional and outstanding efforts" on the part of a Texas mediator. For many individuals it has become a kind of lifetime achievement award in the field of mediation. There have been 27 recipients of this award over the past 22 years, most of whom, like Susanne Adams, have devoted their lives to dispute resolution. Kay Elkins-Elliott is one such person.

*Linda Gibson is a former President of TAM and has served on the TAM board for 22 of the 28 years she has been a TAM member, including 13 years as TAM's Newsletter Editor. She received the Susanne Adams Award in 2015. She now serves as TAM Historian.*