

Three receive 2010 WMU Distinguished Alumni Awards

Release #1011-051; Sept. 16, 2010--Contact: Jeanne Baron; (269) 387-8433

NOTE TO EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS: Visit www.wmich.edu/alumni to obtain photos of the awards recipients. For more information about the awards, contact Jamie Jeremy in the WMU Alumni Association by calling (269) 387-8777.

KALAMAZOO--A federal judge and two multifaceted businesspersons have been selected by the Western Michigan University Alumni Association to receive its most prestigious honor, the Distinguished Alumni Award.

The 2010 recipients of the award are: [Dr. Leslie Wilk Braksick](#) of [Sewickley Heights, Pa.](#), a nationally recognized entrepreneur, leadership coach, business consultant, author and speaker; the Hon. Richard Allen Griffin of [Traverse City, Mich.](#), a judge with the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; and William D. Johnston of [Portage, Mich.](#), president, CEO and chairman of the Greenleaf Companies.

The Distinguished Alumni Award was established in 1963 to recognize graduates of WMU who have achieved a high level of success in their professions. This year's recipients will be honored during an on-campus dinner starting at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 1, in the East Ballroom of the Bernhard Center. Tickets are \$40 per person.

Reservations may be made through Thursday, Sept. 23, by visiting www.wmich.edu/alumni and clicking Calendar or by calling the WMU Alumni Association at (269) 387-8777.

Braksick is regularly called upon by corporate boards and CEOs to consult on such issues as CEO transition and succession, and the challenges of cultural and performance transformation.

She co-founded a global management consultancy in 1993 called the [Continuous Learning Group, Inc. \(CLG\)](#) to serve Fortune 500 companies, and led CLG during its first 10 years as it developed into the world's largest behaviorally based management consultancies.

In 2002, Braksick was named one of Pennsylvania's top-50 Women Business Leaders, and today, CLG is one of the top-100 fastest-growing companies in Pittsburgh, and one of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's top-50 places to work.

Braksick's first book, "[Unlock Behavior, Unleash Profits: Developing Leadership Behavior That Drives Profitability in Your Organization](#)" was published in 2000 and updated by popular demand in a second 2007 edition. It was on the Wall Street Journal's Business Best Seller list and ranked No. 6 among 2007's business books, according to 800-CEO-READ.

Her most recent book, "[Preparing CEOs for Success: What I Wish I Knew](#)," was released last spring. It features interviews with more than two dozen sitting CEOs of such global companies as Bank of America, Chevron, Heinz, Johnson & Johnson, and Pepsico. The publication has been hailed as a "breakthrough book" for its unvarnished quotes and candor from the CEOs interviewed.

Braksick is a member of the Association for Behavior Analysis and the Organizational Behavior Management Network. She also is involved in many civic and community activities, including the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh board and United Way of Allegheny County (Pa.) campaign cabinet.

Braksick earned a bachelor's degree from St. Bonaventure University and master's and doctoral degrees from WMU.

Griffin is one of only 179 federal appellate court judges in the nation. He serves on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit, which encompasses Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, and was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2005 by a 95-0 vote.

While attending law school in Michigan, Griffin worked as a clerk for a Washtenaw County state Circuit Court judge for two years. After graduation, he joined a law firm in his hometown of Traverse City as an associate and later was made a partner in the firm.

In 1985, Griffin became a founding partner of the law firm Read & Griffin. During his 11 years of private practice, he was engaged in an extensive trial practice, trying cases in 13 different counties, handling numerous appeals and serving as a court-appointed mediator throughout Michigan.

Griffin was elected to the Michigan Court of Appeals for the 3rd District in 1988, re-elected to that post in 1996, and elected to the appeals court's 4th District six years later. As a state appellate court judge, he heard civil and criminal matters from across Michigan and wrote more than 280 published opinions in addition to several hundred unpublished ones.

An active member of the Traverse City community, Griffin has served as president of the Grand Traverse Zoological Society and as chairperson of both the Long Lake Township Building Authority and the Desert Storm Welcome Home Committee. He also serves as a chief judge for the Michigan YMCA Youth in Government mock trial program.

Griffin earned a bachelor's degree from WMU, where he was student in the Lee Honors College, and a doctorate in law from the University of Michigan Law School.

Johnston heads the Greenleaf Companies, which includes Greenleaf Trust, Greenleaf Hospitality Group and Catalyst Development, L.L.C. The firm is headquartered in Kalamazoo and collectively employs more than 900 people.

After graduating from WMU, the former college football player built a 14-year career in public education. He began his professional life as a high school teacher and coach, and later served as assistant principal at Kalamazoo's South Junior High School and as athletic director, assistant principal and principal at Mattawan (Mich.) High School.

Johnston left education in 1985 and pursued his passion for investments by joining a national brokerage firm. He rose to vice president of the firm in just six years, but decided to leave and establish Greenleaf Asset Management Inc. He founded Greenleaf Trust in 1998 and a year later, merged it with the asset management company. Today, Greenleaf Trust manages in excess of \$7 billion and has Michigan offices in Birmingham, Holland, Kalamazoo, Petoskey and Traverse City.

In 2000, the Greenleaf Hospitality Group was formed with the purchase of Kalamazoo's Radisson Plaza Hotel and Suites. The group now includes the Holiday Inn West, K-Wings professional hockey team, Stadium Management Group and Wings Stadium. Catalyst Development is the real estate development and management arm of the

Greenleaf Companies, and has approximately 1.5 million square feet of property under management.

A passionate supporter of the Kalamazoo region, Johnston is chairman of Southwest Michigan First and a member of the WMU Board of Trustees. He also serves on the boards of the Bronson Healthcare Group, Donald and Genevieve Gilmore Foundation, Special-Lite and Softech Corp., and WMU Foundation.

Johnston earned bachelor's and master's degrees from WMU.