

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**MICHIGAN LEADER RECOGNIZED FOR GROUNDBREAKING WORK ADVANCING
OPPORTUNITY FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES**

Starfish Family Services CEO Ann Kalass selected to join 2015 class of Ascend Fellows

Inkster, MI, March 9, 2015 –Starfish Family Services is thrilled to announce that CEO Ann Kalass has been selected by The Aspen Institute to join the 2015 class of national Ascend Fellows.

The Ascend Fellowship invests in diverse leaders from a range of sectors who have breakthrough ideas to build economic security, educational success, and health and well-being for low-income families in the United States.

“Poverty and inequality are the central economic, political, and moral issues of our time,” said Walter Isaacson, CEO of the Aspen Institute. “The Ascend Fellowship is part of the Aspen Institute’s commitment to advancing opportunity and equality in America.”

Ann Kalass is eager to collaborate with other leaders who are on the front lines of new solutions to bridge inequality for children and their parents. Among their ideas and innovations:

- brain science research on the sensitive early months of life and parenting for families that have experienced trauma or toxic stress;
- accelerated ‘bootcamps’ that open up training for high demand jobs to students lacking time and resources; and
- systemic shifts in state human services and early education, such as the redesign of child care subsidies.

Ascend Fellows fuel their work with a two-generation approach that invests in both children and their parents.

“This is an extraordinary opportunity for me to learn with and from other leaders across the country who are equally committed to supporting families and children in some of our most distressed communities,” said Kalass. “This experience will also help me become a more effective advocate for policy change that supports low income families.”

The 2015 Ascend Fellows join the vanguard of a national network to advance opportunity for low-income families across the country. This year’s class includes state human services and early education system leaders, forward thinking post-secondary and workforce leaders, breakthrough researchers in health and early care and education, philanthropic leaders, and innovative practitioners across multiple sectors.

These leaders reflect the diversity and talent of America, across gender, race and ethnicity, geography, and sector.

Class Demographics:

- 13 women; 8 men
- 52% people of color
- Represent 18 states
- Serve 348,000 community college and four-year institution students
- Are in public service in 4 states, stewarding \$4.2 billion in public resources
- Provide direct services to more than 78,000 families
- Steward \$521 million in philanthropic resources

For bios and photos of all 21 extraordinary leaders, visit <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org>

The Ascend Fellowship is a values-based leadership program that builds on the best of the Aspen Institute leadership tradition. Ascend Fellows learn from outstanding faculty; participate in signature Institute convenings and platforms; tap powerful networks of social justice and other leaders; and carry out action plans that advance their innovations and solutions on behalf of children and families.

2015 Aspen Institute Ascend Fellows:

John Annis, Senior Vice President of Community Investment at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County (Sarasota, FL)

Dr. Laurie Miller Brotman, Bezos Family Foundation Professor of Early Childhood Development and Professor of Population Health and Psychiatry at the NYU School of Medicine (New York, NY)

Melvin W. Carter III, Director of the Office of Early Learning at the Minnesota Department of Education (Minneapolis, MN)

Betsy Delgado, Vice President of Mission Advancement at the Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana (Indianapolis, IN)

Dr. Maria Harper-Marinick, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost for the Maricopa County Community College District (Phoenix, AZ)

Dr. Raquel Hatter, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Human Services (Nashville, TN)

John Hudson III, President of the Alabama Power Foundation (Birmingham, AL)

Dr. Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (Hartford, CT)

Kevin Jordan, Senior Vice-President for National Programs at the Local Initiatives Support Coalition (Washington, DC)

Kirsten Lodal, Co-Founder and CEO of LIFT (Washington, DC)

Ann Kalass, CEO of Starfish Family Services (Inkster, MI)

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics of University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (Madison, WI)

Dr. Aisha Nyandoro, founding Executive Director of Springboard To Opportunities (Jackson, MS)

Dr. Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, President of Queens College of the City University of New York (New York, NY)

Dr. William Serrata, President of the El Paso County Community College District (El Paso, TX)

Dr. Darius Tandon, Associate Professor at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine (Evanston, IL)

Dr. Sarah Enos Watamura, director of the Child Health and Development Lab and associate professor at the University of Denver (Denver, CO)

Dr. Sherece Y. West-Scantlebury, President and CEO of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (Little Rock, AR)

Roxane White, President and CEO of Nurse-Family Partnership (Denver, CO)

Ann Silverberg Williamson, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Human Services (Salt Lake City, UT)

Dr. Katharine W. Winograd, President of Central New Mexico Community College (Albuquerque, NM)

Founded in 1963, **Starfish Family Services** is a private, nonprofit agency serving vulnerable children and families in metropolitan Detroit. Our passion is early childhood development. We strive to prepare young children for a successful start to school. Our programs and services uniquely recognize and respect the important role of parents and other caregivers in the long-term success of children. As a leading provider of Early Head Start and Head Start programs we embrace a comprehensive strategy that also works to address challenges the children and their family may face at home. We provide: parenting programs, children's mental health services, after-school programs, and emergency shelter for teens and youth in crisis. www.starfishonline.org

Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move vulnerable children and their parents toward educational success and economic security. We take a two-generation approach to our work - focusing on children and their parents together. We bring a gender and a racial equity lens to our analysis. For more information, visit <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org>

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute is based in Washington, DC; Aspen, Colorado; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has offices in New York City and an international network of partners. For more information, visit www.aspeninstitute.org

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