



## **2017 Community Leader Legal Award**



**Honorable Robert T. Russell, Jr.**

Judge Russell is the Associate Judge for Buffalo City Court and serves by appointment as an Acting Erie County Court Judge. He is a pioneer on the bench, and is determined that regardless of a person's identity, background, or circumstance, all shall have equity when it comes to the law. Judge Russell sees the humanity in every case that comes before him and the impact the legal system has on individuals. He is committed to making a difference for all who enter his courtroom.

The founder of Buffalo's Drug Treatment Court, for which he is still the presiding judge, he is also founder of Buffalo's Mental Health Treatment Court. In both these unique courts, the defendants are provided with rehabilitation, justice, and hope, not just in accordance with the law, but also with regards to the situations that brought them to court in the first place.

Judge Russell is also creator of the nation's first Veterans' Treatment Court, a hybrid drug and mental health court that serves only veterans. It diverts them from the traditional criminal court system, taking into consideration their unique circumstances, working to provide them with the services needed to turn their lives around. It has been so successful that it was established as a model for other similar courts throughout the country.

For his commitment to justice for all and for his determination to always recognize the humanity and vitality of those who come before him, the NFJC proudly presents the Honorable Robert T. Russell, Jr. with the 2017 Community Leader Legal Award.



*"...a just community begins with me!"*

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