

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

The law firm of Middlebrooks & Gray, P.A. is pleased to announce that Mary Jo Middlebrooks has been chosen as the recipient of the 2018 Sue Shelton White Award, presented by Jackson Area Business & Professional Women and The Jackson Sun. The award was announced at the Sterling Awards on April 11, 2018, in Jackson, Tennessee. This is an annual award to an outstanding attorney in West Tennessee who is a community activist working to create or change legislation to improve the lives of women and children in the state of Tennessee.

Middlebrooks, whose practice is in Jackson, is a Certified Family Law Specialist, Rule 31 Mediator, Federal Mediator, and a Commissioner to the Access to Justice Commission for Tennessee. She received a B.S.E. from the University of Arkansas, and her Doctor of Jurisprudence from Vanderbilt University School of Law

Among her many contributions to West Tennessee: 1978, opened law firm as a sole practitioner; first female trial attorney in Jackson. One of only 11 Tennessee lawyers recognized by the National Board of Trial Advocacy as a Family Law Specialist. In 1978, she was one of three organizers for West Tennessee Legal Services, Inc. to provide a voice for the indigent in 17 counties and has served on the Board of Directors for 38 years. Rule 31 Listed Mediator in General Civil/Family Mediation, "Specially Trained in Domestic Violence Issues." Former attorney coach for the Jackson-Central Merry High School Mock Trial Team, which won the state competition in 1989. In 2017 was appointed by the Tennessee Supreme Court as a Commissioner to the Access to Justice Commission.

Her awards and community leadership include the following: She has been a tireless mentor for two generations of young female attorneys. She has lobbied for women's issues for 40 years, including the Equal Rights Amendment, Equal Pay, reproductive freedom and equality for all. She is a fearless and vocal advocate for civil rights. She attends and lobbies for women's issues and civil rights at the state legislature. She has marched in Washington, D.C. and in Nashville in support of women's and family issues. Charter Member, Tennessee Lawyers' Association for Women; Charter Member, Lawyers' Association for Women, Anne Harris Schneider Chapter; Past President and member of Jackson Area Business and Professional Women; Past President, Jackson-Madison County Bar Association; 2007 Woman of Achievement awarded by Jackson Area Business & Professional Women; 2008 Tennessee Bar Foundation Fellow; Master of the Bench, Howell Edmunds Jackson American Inn of Court; 2008 Pro Bono Award by the Legal Services Corporation for extraordinary commitment to providing equal access to justice; honored by the General Assembly of

the State of Tennessee by Senate Joint Resolution No. 619 for meritorious service to the State of Tennessee (January 28, 2008); 2010 Sterling Award; 2011 Second Century Award by the Jackson-Madison County NAACP; 2011 WRAP Women of Empowerment Award.

The namesake of the award, Sue Shelton White (1887-1943), was a Suffragist, Attorney, and General Counsel implementing the Social Security Act, who was born in Henderson, Tennessee.

In 1918, she served as chair of the National Woman's Party in Tennessee and editor of NWP's national paper, the Suffragist. In 1913, she became an officer of the Jackson League of the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association. She participated in Washington demonstrations, burning an effigy of President Wilson in front of the White House on Feb. 9, 1919. She was arrested and sentenced to five days in prison.

After Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment on June 4, 1919, White returned to Tennessee and helped make Tennessee the thirty-sixth state to vote for ratification, achieving the three-fourths majority necessary to give women the right to vote in America.

From 1920 to 1926, she worked as a clerk and later legal secretary for Tennessee Senator Kenneth McKellar in Washington, D.C. In 1926, she returned to Jackson, as the city's first female attorney in her own law firm, Anderson and White. She was also active in the state's Democratic Party. She helped write Tennessee's first married women's property bill, an old age pension act, and a mother's pension act.

Sue Shelton White is honored with a bronze bust sculpture by Wanda Stanfill on the Jackson City Hall Plaza. This monument is part of the Tennessee Woman Suffrage Heritage Trail, a significant preservation of the state's history, and a grand part of the Centennial Celebration of the Nineteenth Amendment. She is also one of the five Tennessee suffragists honored in the Alan LeQuire monument in Centennial Park in Nashville.

Photo Attached: Mary Jo Middlebrooks

Photography credit: Mitch Carter/The Moore Studio, Jackson, TN