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New Magistrate to Take Office in Martinsburg

For immediate release Friday, July 1, 2022

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. – West Virginia’s 159th magistrate will be sworn into office at 4 p.m. today, Friday, July 1, at Destiny Baptist Church, 115 Raleigh Street, Martinsburg.

The event is open to the media.

Michelle Barnes-Russell was appointed June 14 by Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties) Chief Judge Michael D. Lorensen. Her first day on the bench will be Tuesday, July 5.

Magistrate Barnes-Russell is the first person to hold the new position that was established by the West Virginia Legislature earlier this year. The effective date of the new position is July 1.

“It is an honor to have the opportunity to serve the residents of Berkeley County,” she said.

Magistrate Barnes-Russell is a 1988 graduate of John Handley High School, 1992 graduate of Virginia State University (Bachelor of Science degree in Public Administration), and a 2005 graduate of Mountain State University (Master of Science Degree in Strategic Leadership).

In August 2021, she was accepted into a Doctoral Executive Leadership program at the University of Charleston. She is a 2008 Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Berkeley graduate and 2013 West Virginia State Chamber of Commerce Leadership graduate.

In 2011, she completed General, Juvenile, and Domestic Relations Mediation Certification through the Fairfield Center Supreme Court of Virginia Mediation Training program.

She was elected to the Berkeley County Board of Education from 2016 to 2020.

Magistrate Barnes-Russell has served on numerous nonprofit boards/organizations. She currently serves on the Board of Directors at Eastridge Health Systems and is a member of the Eastern Panhandle Diabetes Coalition. In 2016, she was appointed by Governor Jim Justice to the West Virginia Women's Commission and was Chair of the Economic Empowerment Committee. She is ordained Deaconess at Destiny Baptist Church; is a member of the Eastern Panhandle Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; and has been a member of the Martin Luther King Scholarship Committee since 2012.

She is married to Phillip Russell. They are the parents of two adult children.

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