

JUDICIAL DIVISION HOSTS FIRST NATIONAL JUDICIAL OUTREACH CONFERENCE PRESENTED BY THE JUDGES NETWORK

by Jack L. Brown

Judges from all parts of the country took part in the Judicial Division's Inaugural National Judicial Outreach Conference presented by the Judges Network April 30 and May 1, 2004 at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. JD Chair, Rick Bien, from Kansas City, Missouri, welcomed attendees to the conference. In his comments, he emphasized the importance of judicial outreach by judges in their own communities and the incredible resource of outreach materials available to judges and lawyers from the Judges Network website: www.abanet.org/jd/judgesnetwork.html.

Past ABA President, Phillip S. Anderson, was the keynote speaker of the National Judicial Outreach Conference. Anderson indicated the purpose of judicial outreach was to help the public understand the profound stake that it has in our justice system and what it is that judges do. "Judges enforce our rights and protect our liberty, and an independent judiciary is essential to a free society. That is an important lesson and the public wants to learn it from judges," stated Anderson.

Anderson referenced the national survey conducted during his presidential term in 1998-1999 entitled Public Understanding and Perceptions of the American Justice System. Eighty percent of the people surveyed believed the American system of justice is the best in the world; however, more than half of those believed that race and gender make a difference in how a person is treated by the system. Anderson challenged conference attendees to work on eliminating racial and gender bias in the system.

The first conference program consisted of a panel of judges discussing ethical issues which typically occur when getting involved in judicial outreach activities. The panel was moderated by the Honorable Richard L. Fruin, Jr. from Los Angeles, California. Panelists included the Honorable D'Army Bailey, the Honorable J. Daniel Breen, and the Honorable Janice Holder, all from Memphis, Tennessee.

The second session focused on outreach skills which could be used by presenters to teach to different audiences. Kathy Story, Assistance Executive Director of the University of Memphis Leadership Institute in Judicial Education, presented "Teaching Around the Circle" which involves presentation strategies in a learning circle. Attendees found the circle approach to be challenging and a powerful tool in teaching judicial outreach programs.

The final program for the Friday, April 30 session was entitled Pennsylvania Commonwealth Partners Program. The model program was created by Pennsylvania judges to meet with state legislators for dinner to discuss issues of common concern, particularly judicial independence. Philadelphia attorney, Edward W. Madeira, Jr., introduced Pennsylvania Superior Court Judge Jack A. Panella who presented the program.

The National Judicial Outreach Conference was held in conjunction with the Young Lawyers Division Affiliate Outreach Conference, also hosted at the Peabody Hotel. On Friday evening, conference attendees had a dinner and dance with young lawyers on the rooftop of the Peabody Hotel. Judges enjoyed the opportunity to interact with young lawyers about assisting in the presentation and coordination of judicial outreach programs in their communities.

Day two of the conference on Saturday, May 1 consisted of three workshop programs which were attended by both judges and young lawyers. The first workshop session was a presentation of the national issues forum program, “And Justice for All” by the Honorable Louraine Arkfeld of Tempe, Arizona and the Honorable Charles A. Johnson, presiding judge of the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals. This program, sponsored by the ABA and the Kettering Foundation, works with participants to address how to improve the justice system and to ensure that it provides equal access to impartial justice. The program is very popular in town hall settings or with high school students.

The second workshop session featured highlights from the Judges Network program on *Brown v. Board of Education*, which was presented at three Memphis area high schools on Friday morning prior to the start of the conference. United States District Court Judge Bernice Donald of Memphis, Tennessee and Memphis Municipal Court Judge Ernestine Hunt Dorse hosted the presentations. The workshop also featured other Memphis area judges who participated as presenters of the *Brown v. Board of Education* program in Memphis area high schools. The ABA has also created a dialogue on the *Brown v. Board of Education* to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the landmark decision which features a program to guide discussions among high school students, judges and lawyers concerning the significance of the *Brown v. Board* decision.

The third workshop was presented by Tennessee Supreme Court Chief Justice Frank F. Drowota. The Tennessee SCALES Program (Tennessee Supreme Court Advancing Legal Education for Students) is a multi-part program in which judges and lawyers engage high school students in interactive activities to improve their understanding of the courts. The program begins with lawyers visiting classrooms to provide information about the judicial branch. Students also attend Supreme Court oral arguments, followed by a lunch with the justices, local judges, attorneys and other officials.

Judges Network Chair Jack L. Brown of Tulsa, Oklahoma recognized the incredible work by the Honorable Bernice Donald of Memphis, Tennessee in coordinating all judicial outreach activities at three Memphis area high schools and two middle schools. Four of the five programs featured the Judges Network *Brown v. Board of Education* interactive outreach program while the fifth program was a modified “Courage to Live” presentation. The schools and judges and lawyers participating in the judicial outreach programs were as follows:

1. Central High School
Judge: Rita L. Stotts
Lawyers: Richard Fields and Jonathan Hancock

2. Cypress Middle School
Judges: Karl Grube and Ernestine Hunt Dorse
Lawyers: Van Turner and Gary Vanasek
3. Sheffield High School
Judge: Gwen Rooks
Lawyers: Frank Cantrell and Harrison McIver
4. White Station Middle School
Judges: Louraine Arkfeld and Carolyn Blackett
Lawyers: Bruce McMullen and Susan Ratner
5. White Station High School
Judge: Andre Davis
Lawyers: Oscar “Bo” Carr, James Gilliland, and Irma Merrill

Over fifteen judges who attended the conference participated as observers of the judicial outreach programs at the various Memphis area high schools.

Recognition was also given to Lexis-Nexis for their assistance in providing scholarship support for Tennessee state judges attending the national conference. According to Bien, by all accounts, “the Inaugural National Conference was a huge success.” Recognition was also given to ABA staff member, Paula Nessel, for her outstanding work on the conference. The following representatives of JD conferences also attended the national program:

1. Federal trial judges: Honorable Andre Davis of Baltimore, MD
2. State court trial judges: Honorable Richard L. Fruin, Jr., Los Angeles, CA
3. Administrative law judges: Honorable Jody Levine of Oklahoma City, OK
4. Specialized court judges: Honorable Michael Pietruszka of Lancaster, NY
5. Lawyers Conference: Jack L. Brown of Tulsa, OK