

Judge Hayes, local bar members hope to expose area students to legal system by sponsoring essay contest

Topic is 'What is role of law in fulfilling promise of Declaration of Independence'

By **TIM GULLA**

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When Circuit Court Judge Mark Hayes addresses a jury pool at the beginning of a court week, they're likely to get a good lesson on the U.S. Judicial System.

And they'll also hear how much he respects it. The system relies on the good common sense of average, ordinary citizens to operate and more than 200 years after it was designed it remains a model of fairness and impartiality that developing countries still hope to emulate.

Judge Hayes and the Spartanburg Bar Association are hoping to give area students a better look at the system as part of the American Bar Association's annual observance of Law Day. Hayes and members of the local bar are holding an essay contest for area students that will culminate with an awards presentation in May.

U.S. Savings bonds for \$100 will be presented to the winners of each grade division, with a \$500 savings bond going to the overall winner.

The essay contest is open to all 9th through 12th grade students in Cherokee, Union and Spartanburg counties. Area school districts recently were notified of the contest rules. Home-schooled students and students from nonparticipating schools are welcome to enter the contest as well.

Interested students will have to write an essay of 1,000 words or less on "What is the role of law in fulfilling the promise of the Declaration of Independence?" while adhering to some specific ground rules. They will have to pick a current law and tell how it's used in fulfilling the promise of the Declaration of Independence. They'll have to explain the law they select, describe what it does, explore its benefits and consequences, its impact, and explain why the law needs to be in place

and who will continue to enforce it.

Hayes, who currently is serving as the National Chair of the Committee of Fair and Impartial Courts for the Conference of State Trial Judges Division of the American Bar Association, is hoping for many entries.

"It's a great way to get students exposed to the legal system and hopefully plant seeds of understanding they can carry with them later in life," he said. "Too often, the public gets a view of the judiciary based on judge television shows. While those shows are reflective of some small

aspects of the legal community and the role of judges, they miss the bigger point that our legal system is set up so that our Constitution is observed, the laws that are adopted by our Congress and Legislature are observed, so that we truly are a nation of laws that all men and women have to observe."

Deadline for entries is 4 p.m., April 3. Home-schooled students and students from non-participating schools can send their entries to Judge Mark Hayes - Law Day Contest, 180 Magnolia St., Spartanburg County Courthouse, Spartanburg, 29202.



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