

# Circuit Judge Michael Andrews Is Recipient Of State's Distinguished Judicial Service Award

CLEARWATER – CLEARWATER – Sixth Judicial Circuit Judge Michael F. Andrews has been selected to receive the Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice's Distinguished Judicial Service Award, presented annually to a Florida judge for "outstanding and sustained service to the public."

Judge Andrews will receive the award from Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis on Jan. 31 during a special ceremony at the State Supreme Court. The award is one of four given annually by the Florida Bar in a program that recognizes the *pro bono* – without compensation – activities of an attorney, a law firm, a bar association and a judge. The judicial honor was created in 2004 when then-Chief Justice Barbara Pariente said it should go to a judge whose off-the-bench service "relates to the administration of justice."



*Judge Andrews*

Judge Andrews is being recognized for creating what he calls the "Judicial Forum," an annual program designed to acquaint at-risk youth with the judicial system while providing encouragement, inspiration and motivation. At the forums, local jurists are joined by other African-American judges from other parts of the state. Each judge is encouraged to provide a brief statement of their personal history and struggles and what they did to avoid pitfalls. The hope is that the judges will prove to be a positive influence and serve as role models for those in attendance.

A video of the 2007 forum can be viewed at [www.pinellascounty.org/media/consumer/judge.ram](http://www.pinellascounty.org/media/consumer/judge.ram).

In his nomination documents, Hillsborough County Judge Eric R. Myers said that since 2001, "Judge Andrews has contributed over 1000 hours of his time to this worthwhile effort." The nomination also pointed out that he has enlisted the assistance of other judges, various local law enforcement agencies and various other professions to help with the forums, where topics of discussion include, but are not limited to:

- Role of the Judiciary as it relates to youth
- Relating to Law Enforcement and the Judiciary
- "Staying out of the Courthouse"
- Peer pressure and decision-making
- Personal responsibility
- Educational pursuits: desire, direction and commitment
- Mentoring and "giving back"
- What it takes to be a good citizen
- Respect for yourself, family and the community

Since Judge Andrews began presenting the local forums, he has been invited to conduct similar discussions in Orlando, Daytona Beach and Miami. In 2005, he moderated a similar program that was conducted by the National Bar Association in Orlando. That panel featured several black leaders using their own examples of overcoming adversity to inspire more than 30 black students. A mother of an attendee at that program was quoted in the *Orlando Sentinel* as saying "When a successful person shares a personal story of how they became successful, then you know it's possible."

Judge Andrews, who grew up in poverty in South Florida, says, “No subject is off limits for discussion. We want to engage and address young people and offer words of inspiration.”

Judge Andrews has also volunteered his time serving as a mentor to middle school students through the 5000 Role Models of Excellence program sponsored by the Pinellas County School Board. He has served in this capacity for 15 years working with students at Largo Middle, Kennedy Middle, Palm Harbor Middle and Tarpon Springs Middle.

Judge Andrews also serves as an organizer and facilitator of a bi-annual free law clinic in St. Petersburg called the “Law Fest.” The clinic brings lawyers together from all areas of the law – both state and federal – to provide free legal services for those who generally cannot afford to hire a lawyer. The “Law Fest” is offered in conjunction with an organization called “Successes Unlimited.”

Judge Andrews is the son of Bahamian emigrant father who worked as a custodian and a mother who worked as a maid. When he was appointed county judge in 1997, he was the youngest judge in the state of Florida. He has been a circuit judge since 2003 and currently sits in the Sixth Judicial Circuit’s Family Law Division in Clearwater.

He earned an Associate of the Arts Degree in 1985 at Florida State University, a Bachelor of Science degree in political science at Florida State University in 1987 and a Juris Doctorate degree from the FSU College of Law in 1991.

*A video of Judge Andrews’ 2007 Judicial Forum may be viewed at*  
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