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St. Petersburg College Recognizes Judges Walter Schafer, Susan Schaeffer

ST. PETERSBURG – Circuit Judge Walter L. Schafer, Jr. and retired Circuit Judge Susan F. Schaeffer are among the three 2007 inductees into the St. Petersburg College Hall of Distinction, which recognizes friends and alumni who “have brought honor to themselves, the community and SPC.”

Ten days later at the college’s 103rd commencement ceremony, Judge Schaeffer was named the college’s Outstanding Alumna for 2007.

The two Sixth Judicial Circuit judges and Ken Cherven, chief executive officer and president of First Community Bank, were the guests of honor at the Hall of

Distinction dinner at the Renaissance Vinoy Resort in St. Petersburg. The Hall of Distinction was established by the St. Petersburg College Foundation to “recognize alumni and friends of the college who, through their superlative achievements in professional and civic life and their continued support over the years, have brought honor to themselves, the community and SPC.”

Judge Schafer, who was appointed to a vacant judgeship in December 2005, is a two-term chairman and current member of the College Foundation Board of Directors. He also has served as president of Mease Health Care Foundation, treasurer of the Morton Plant Mease Foundation and vice chairman of the Pinellas Sheriff Civil Service Board, president of the Pinellas Executives Association and a member of the Pinellas County Estate Planning Council.

He is a board-certified tax attorney who practiced law in Pinellas County for several years. Prior to that, he earned an undergraduate degree at Florida State University, a juris doctorate degree from



Retired Judge Susan F. Schaeffer, above addresses the 2007 graduating class at St. Petersburg College. At right, Circuit Judge Walter L. Schafer, Jr. expresses his appreciation for his induction into the college’s Hall of Distinction.





Retired Circuit Judge Susan Schaeffer is all smiles as she receives the St. Petersburg College's Outstanding Alumna Award from Clerk of Court Ken Burke, a member of the college's Board of Trustees.



Circuit Judge Walter L. Schafer, Jr. accepts the Hall of Distinction award from St. Petersburg College Alumni Association President Laura Brock. Judge Susan Schaeffer received a similar Hall of Distinction plaque.

Capital University Law School in Columbus, OH, and a master's in law degree from the University of Miami. He currently presides over probate and juvenile delinquency cases in Pasco County, one of two counties in the Sixth Judicial Circuit.

At the commencement ceremony at Tropicana Field, Judge Schaeffer told the 662 graduates that she was honored by Stetson University College of Law with a similar Outstanding Alumna award, "But it meant no more to me than this (the SPC award) because this is where it all started." To the graduates, she expressed wishes of "many changes until you find the one thing that brings you joy." Before finding her joy (law), Judge Schaeffer studied music at SPC and was in the class of 1962.

After graduating from SPC and Stetson, she enjoyed a successful career as a public defender and private practice attorney. Prior to her retirement in 2004, she served as a circuit judge for 22 years, six of them as chief judge. She also chaired the state's Trial Court Budget Commission, a committee charged with restructuring the formula used to fund the state's courts.



Inductees get a standing ovation by, from left, Sue Rudd, Judge Schaeffer's long-time judicial assistant; Tena Donahey; retired Circuit Judge Joseph Donahey, a previous inductee; and Circuit Judge Gene Ulmer, whose wife Yvonne emceed the ceremony.

In 1997, she was a finalist for a vacant position on the Florida Supreme Court, and she currently serves as a senior judge around the state. She is known across the country as an expert on death penalty law and taught that subject for 15 years at the National Judicial College.

Judges Schafer and Schaeffer join another retired circuit judge – Joseph Donahey, who previously was inducted into the Hall of Distinction.