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Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Jack Helinger Wins Jurist of the Year Award

CLEARWATER - Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Jack Helinger has been given the 2024 Jurist of the Year award by the Florida chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), the organization announced on Monday, April 28, 2025.

“Judge Jack Helinger was the obvious choice for recipient of the 2024 award for many reasons,” Laura Davis Smith, president of the chapter, said in a prepared statement. “Most importantly, Judge Helinger is a champion of children, recognizing the need to minimize trauma in the lives of litigants and to assist families in breaking the cycle of generational dysfunction.”

Judge Helinger has presided over a family law division since he was appointed to the circuit bench in 2008. He was instrumental in creating educational seminars on “ACEs” (Adverse Childhood Experiences) for attorneys and other family law professionals to help them gain awareness of the emotional trauma that children may experience due to the actions of their parents during a divorce, the prepared statement said.

The Florida chapter of AAML also cited 11 day-long workshops Judge Helinger has given on “Trauma in Families,” which were designed to strengthen partnerships among the courts, family law practitioners, other stakeholders, as well as resource providers, so as to emphasize a trauma-informed approach in family courts.

Among the topics touched on are adverse childhood experiences, the impact of toxic stress, resiliency, and self-care. Judge Helinger acted as a liaison between the Florida Bar Association’s Family Law Section and the Office of the State Courts Administrator, helped develop the curriculum, and recruited and trained local volunteers to serve as workshop leaders.

The workshops were also cited last year when Judge Helinger was given the prestigious 2024 Visionary Award by the Florida Bar’s Family Law Section.

When accepting his more recent award, on Friday, April 25, 2025, at the AAML chapter’s 47th Annual Institute in Tampa, Judge Helinger encouraged those playing various roles while representing parties in family law matters to focus on “resolving problems without additional trauma.”



From left to right: Ashley Myers, AAML Florida Chapter 47th Institute Chair; Laura Davis Smith, AAML Florida Chapter President; Jack Helinger, AAML Florida 2024 Jurist of the Year; Kim Kaszuba, AAML Florida Chapter Jurist of the Year Committee; Lawrence Datz, AAML Florida Chapter Jurist of the Year Chair