

Andrew Jackson Higgins Excellence in Juvenile Justice Award

Thursday, October 25, 2007 - 12 noon



Sue Ashwell

The Award

The Honorable Andrew Jackson Higgins is known as a gracious humanitarian and recognized for his exemplary personal and professional, and lifetime commitment to serve the best interests of Missouri's children.

Judge Higgins has provided support and leadership to Missouri Bar projects resulting in adoptions of modifications of Supreme Court Rules on Continuing Legal Education, Substance Abuse intervention, and Child Support Awards. At the Annual meeting of the Missouri Bar, October 1990, he was a recipient of the Bar's Spurgeon Smithson Award for rendering outstanding service toward the increase and diffusion of justice in our society.

Judge Higgins secured organization of the Missouri Supreme Court Task Force on Permanency Planning for Abused and Neglected Children in 1982 and served as its chairman until his retirement. Under his leadership the state of Missouri inaugurated an interdisciplinary approach to the problem of child abuse and neglect. The Missouri Task Force has served as a national model for coordinated efforts toward permanency planning.

Working directly with the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association, Judge Higgins led the effort to secure the adoption of Supreme Court Rule 111.03 establishing standards for the operation of juvenile detention facilities and removal of children from adult jail detention.

Judge Higgins is a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. He has served on the Advisory Board to the Board of Directors of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association. He was recognized as the Missouri Child Care Association Child Advocate of the Year for 1987, and is the 1990 recipient of the Ann Dandurant Award by the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse-Missouri Chapter. Judge Higgins also received the 1998 Gene Schwilck Award for Outstanding Service to Missouri Children and Youth.

So it is that the ANDREW JACKSON HIGGINS EXCELLENCE IN JUVENILE JUSTICE AWARD was established in May 1992 by the Board of Directors of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association. The award recognizes an individual who shares Judge Higgins' commitment and dedication, and who embraces the philosophy upon which the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association is based: to promote and develop a quality juvenile justice service delivery system for youth.

The Recipient

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Sue Ashwell received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Missouri-St. Louis in 1968. Upon graduation she was selected for participation in the Peace Corps. After working two years as a child welfare worker for the City of St. Louis, Sue was awarded a National Institute of Mental Health scholarship and in 1973 she completed her Masters of Social Work at St. Louis University. Sue is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (L.C.S.W.) in the state of Missouri and a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers, the National Association of Social Workers, and the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association.

Sue Ashwell served as the Director of Family and Support Services with the 21st Circuit. In that position, Sue developed new programs and administered the following services: domestic relations, diagnostic and treatment, educational-vocational, and community service-restitution. Sue also serves as the staff liaison on two nonprofit volunteer corporations which work in partnership with the Family Court of St. Louis County: PayBack, Inc. and Children's Shelter Care, Inc. Sue received national recognition for her efforts with these corporations with her receipt of the 1992 Diamond Award by United to Serve America. To comply with the 1995 legislation that created Missouri Family Courts, the 21st Circuit looked to Sue to develop and implement parent education classes for divorcing parents with children.

In 2003 as the Court's Juvenile Minority Overrepresentation Project leader, Sue developed Court-community collaborative to address disproportionate minority confinement, which led to participation in the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2006. In 2004 Sue was selected to participate in the prestigious Leadership St. Louis program.

Sue's husband Jim Ashwell recently retired from law practice after 33 years. Her daughter Elizabeth has a Master's degree in Public Policy Administration; she lives in St. Louis and telecommutes as a Senior Event Coordinator with the Washington Speakers Bureau; travels with Dr. Alan Greenspan when he speaks to groups professionally. Her son Michael graduated in May 2007 from Colorado State University, BS degree in Construction Management; he works as a Project/Field Engineer and Estimator for the Meza Construction Company in Denver.

