

Andrew Jackson Higgins Excellence in Juvenile Justice Award

Thursday, October 23, 2008 - 12 noon



Ray Grush

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

Ray is one of ten children and a twin born to Ed and Henrietta Grush. Though born and raised in South St. Louis, Missouri, he attended high school at St. Joseph Seminary near Chicago, Illinois and two years of college seminary at Our Lady of Angels Seminary in Quincy, Illinois. Ray received a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from the University of Missouri - Columbia in 1972 and a Master of Arts degree in management and human resource development from Webster University in 1989. He is a member of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association. Ray's entire professional career of thirty-six years has been with Missouri's 11th Judicial Circuit. He was initially appointed a Deputy Juvenile Officer in October, 1972; Chief Juvenile Officer in August, 1975; and, Family Court Administrator in January, 1998. During his tenure, the Juvenile/Family Court has implemented more than ten programs targeted at specific juvenile offender populations. Ray served as a member of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Review Committee from its inception in 1980 until MJJRC dissolved itself in 1985. With the Children's Division Ray served in the 80's and 90's for approximately 10 years on the Area II Foster Parent Advisory Committee and for 2 years on a committee re-writing one of the Division's manuals on policy and procedures. With the Division of Youth Services, he served on an ad hoc committee in 1996 and again in 2007 framing the Division's Juvenile Court Diversion program. With the Department of Mental Health, he served on the Juvenile Court Advisory Committee for Hawthorn Children's Psychiatric Hospital in the late 1970's and on its Stakeholder Advisory Committee from 2005 through 2007. In 1990, he served on a Supreme Court Committee chaired by Judge Andrew Jackson Higgins that drafted the standards for the operation of juvenile detention facilities. Over the years, Ray has served on various committees with the Office of State Courts Administrator including juvenile forms, court performance standards, first juvenile officer workload study and the Juvenile Court Rules Work Group. Asked of what he is most proud, Ray states, "Clearly, is it the common mission we all share in the juvenile justice field, regardless of agency or role within that agency. We do important work and, when we work together, we do it well."