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Judges Recognized and Honored

CLEARWATER – One made a potentially unpopular ruling. Another brought some light to the issue of diversity. Others merely did exemplary work, day in and day out.

A half dozen judges in the Sixth Judicial Circuit have been recognized for their integrity, fairness, competence, and independence of thought.

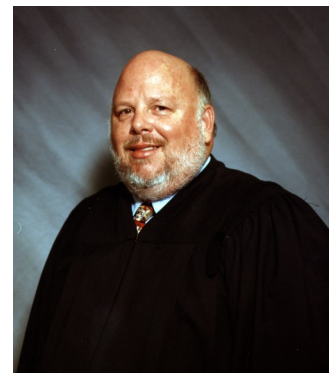
Four of the six were honored at the Clearwater Bar Association’s Annual Law Day luncheon.

Among the honors bestowed by the bar association was the George W. Greer Judicial Independence Award, named after the judge who presided over the Terri Schiavo case. The award recognizes a jurist who makes a ruling that goes against the interests of the powers that be.

This year, the prestigious award was given to Pinellas County Judge Patrick Caddell, who found St. Petersburg’s electronic sign ordinance had different restrictions for different people, depending on where their signs were located, and therefore was unconstitutional.

Judge Caddell was battling cancer at the time of the presentation and could not attend. In a note to the bar association, however, he expressed his gratitude, saying, “Independence of thought and the freedom to reach decisions while ignoring outside pressures is so very at the heart of what we do.”

Judge Caddell has since succumbed to his illness.



Judge Patrick Caddell

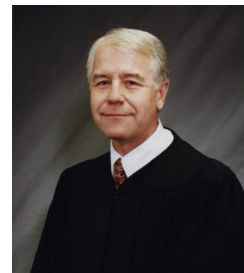


Judge Gross

Three Sixth Circuit judges were also recognized. The bar association gave two of the three the John U. Bird Judicial Excellence Award. They were Raymond Gross, who will retire on Dec. 31, and William R. Webb.

Judge Gross, a graduate of the Florida State University College of Law, was a defense attorney for roughly 20 years before Gov. Lawton Chiles appointed him to the bench in 1995. He has served in the Criminal, Family and Unified Family Court divisions.

Judge Webb worked as an assistant state attorney for 11 years before joining what is now Carlson, Meisner, Hart and Hayslett, where he was partner before he was elected judge in 1994.



Judge Webb



Judge Moore

Circuit Judge Patrice Moore, now presiding in the Unified Family Court Division, was also honored. She was given a President’s Award for her work as chairperson of the bar association’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee. While chairperson, she coordinated an annual Diversity Symposium Luncheon and Seminar that many found refreshing.

The Clearwater Bar Association also honored Ron Stuart, the circuit’s public information officer (PIO), with its annual Liberty Bell Award, which recognizes someone who is not a lawyer for outstanding service. Stuart, retiring in September, has worked “tirelessly” to help the public understand how the courts function, according to the bar association’s presenter, F. Wallace Pope. Stuart began working as the PIO in 2002 after a newspaper career that included stints as the editor of the *Clearwater Sun* and founding editor of the *Tampa Bay Business Journal*.



Ron Stuart



Judge Campbell

Meanwhile, in St. Petersburg, the St. Petersburg Bar Association awarded its 2014 Judicial Appreciation Award to Circuit Judge Pamela Campbell. Each year, the bar association sends out nomination forms to its 1,100 members, and this year, Judge Campbell received more nominations than anyone else, said Melissa Byers, the association’s executive director. Before making a nomination, association members are asked to take into account a person’s courtroom demeanor, judicial experience, helpfulness to lawyers and litigants, and extra activities which promote the administration of justice and civic participation.

Farther north, the West Pasco Bar Association awarded its annual Justice Award to Circuit Judge Lynn Tepper. Among her many accomplishments, Judge Tepper was recognized for her unswerving commitment to have a single judge address all the issues troubling a particular family, from juvenile delinquency to custody. Two years ago, her Dade City courtroom was selected as one of only six sites across the country to implement such an approach. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) wanted Judge Tepper’s to be one of the courtrooms where its Project ONE initiative was launched.



Judge Tepper