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Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education is Recipient of Sandra Day O'Connor Award for the Advancement of Civics Education

NEW ORLEANS — The Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education (LCLCE) has been named the 2011 recipient of the Sandra Day O'Connor Award for the Advancement of Civics Education by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The award honors an organization, court or individual who has promoted, inspired, improved or led an innovation or accomplishment in the field of civics education related to the justice system.

“The Louisiana program stands out for its impressive array of innovative programs, its exemplary efforts at collaboration, and the fact that it reaches students throughout the state,” said NCSC President Mary McQueen. The award will be presented at a future date.

The LCLCE is a nonprofit organization that coordinates, implements and develops law and civics education programs; trains educators how to teach civics education programs; and assists with the delivery of law and civic education programs throughout Louisiana. The organization was established in 1992 and contains several components and programs, including Lawyers in the Classroom/Judges in the Classroom; We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution; Annual Summer Institute for Social Studies Educators; and Law Signature Schools.

On reviewing the programs implemented by the LCLCE, U.S. Supreme Court Justice (Ret.) Sandra Day O'Connor wrote via letter that she was impressed. “With the development of the programs and its training of educators, LCLCE, along with its volunteer professionals, have benefited numerous students throughout the state of Louisiana. This is exactly what I envisioned would happen throughout the country,” she wrote.

Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Catherine D. Kimball and State Court Administrator Timothy F. Averill nominated the LCLCE for the award.

“There is no better way to educate our youth than with organizations such as the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education (LCLCE). For nearly 20 years, its activities have promoted understanding and a sense of pride in our justice system and government,” Chief Justice Kimball said. “This honor is well-deserved and I applaud LCLCE for being recognized as the recipient of the 2011 Sandra Day O'Connor Award for the Advancement of Civics Education,” she added.

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New Orleans attorney Mark A. Cunningham, currently serving as LCLCE president, said this award represents a true collaboration of several legal professionals. “This award has been earned over the course of more than a decade and reflects the work of countless Louisiana judges, attorneys and educators working in partnership to make certain that younger generations understand and appreciate the importance of the rule of law in our society,” he said.

A former LCLCE president, Louisiana 4th Judicial District Court Judge C. Wendell Manning summed up the organization’s impact on Louisiana students. “The lesson plans and programs are interactive, transforming instruction in civics and law-related education into a fun experience for both students and teachers. In a nutshell, the LCLCE makes law and civics education come alive in the classroom,” he said.

This is the second year the award is being presented. The first recipient was South Carolina Chief Justice Jean H. Toal. The award is named in honor of retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor because of her commitment to improving civics education. Since retiring from the bench in 2006, Justice O’Connor has become a tireless advocate working to increase awareness and understanding of how our government works. She established iCivics, a program that uses web-based educational tools to teach civics education and to inspire students to be active participants in society.

The National Center for State Courts, headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., is a nonprofit court reform organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice by providing leadership and service to the state courts. Founded in 1971 by the Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Justice of the United States Warren E. Burger, NCSC provides education, training, technology, management and research services to the nation’s state courts.

The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 21,000 members in the practice of law. The state-wide association, as part of its multi-faceted mission, promotes and maintains access to justice initiatives for the state’s residents, assists the Louisiana Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law, upholds the honor of the courts and the profession, and supports programs that increase public understanding of and respect for the law.

The Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education, the public education partner of the Louisiana State Bar Association, promotes the practical understanding of and respect for the law. The Center is a nonprofit organization that coordinates, implements and develops civics and law-related education programs for use throughout the state’s elementary, middle and high schools. The Center also trains teachers to assist in the delivery of these programs throughout the state.

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