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## Dedication to our youth: Judge Bethancourt given prestigious honor for work with kids

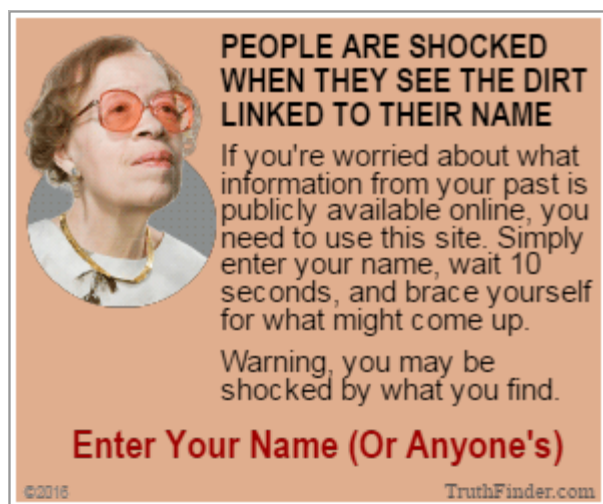
By JOHN DeSANTIS Senior Staff Writer Oct 4, 2016 0



A Terrebonne Parish judge has been honored for his dedication to young people, as evinced by the time he has spent sharing knowledge and experience with them in both classrooms and special courtroom programs.

State District Judge Randy Bethancourt received the Judge Benjamin Jones Judges in the Classroom award Sunday at the Louisiana Annual Fall Judges Conference at the Westin Canal Place Hotel in New Orleans Sunday.

Bethancourt, a former private practice lawyer and assistant district attorney, was first elected to the bench in 2002 and re-elected without opposition in 2014. His current term expires in 2020.



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“I hope that by introducing students to the legal system in this fashion, giving them the opportunity to learn about the court, and ask questions and gain a better understanding of the process, we can have them return to the court as a lawyer or judge, instead of someone in trouble with the law,” Bethancourt said, explaining the many times he has appeared at school programs and hosted in-court activities.

The Judge Benjamin Jones Judges in the Classroom award honors a member of the judiciary who has contributed greatly to the law-related education of Louisiana youth. It is named in honor of Judge Benjamin Jones, who served as a 4th Judicial District Court Judge for over 22 years. He was considered a driving force in creating the Judges in the Classroom program many years ago.

According to the presenters, Bethancourt has reached more than 17,000 individual students in his activities with youth since his ascension to the bench in 2003.

“In hundreds of one to three hour interactive presentations, he has shared practical, real world legal experiences with students K-12,” a statement from the Association reads, noting that he has served as a project facilitator and as a mock trial judge at the local, state and national levels. Bethancourt has also been available, organizers said, “to assist in the handling of school bullying situations.”

“When there was a problem at a local school with bullying, Judge Bethancourt helped organize a team of speakers to talk to the classes involved in the problem,” material related to his award states. “He immediately went into action to help the school raise awareness and talk to the students about the consequences of their actions.”

Bethancourt also regularly participates in the training of CASA volunteers, who act as advocates for children in courtroom situations.

He was named Judge of the Year for the State of Louisiana in 2011, and regularly participates in the LSU and Loyola law school orientations.

Judge Jones, for whom the award was named, was a private practice attorney in Monroe, legal counsel to the governor of Massachusetts, an assistant U.S. attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice in Boston, chief administrative law judge for the Board of Appeal on Motor Vehicle Liability, Policy & Bonds in Boston and as a legal services attorney for the Boston Legal Assistance Project. The Fourth Judicial District, where he served in Louisiana on the bench, Ouachita and Morehouse parishes. •

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### John DeSantis

Senior Staff Writer John DeSantis is a veteran journalist and author who grew up in New York City, but has spent most of his career in the Bayou Region. A specialist in criminal justice, he enjoys boating and historical research.

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