



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Family Court Judge receives award for helping children

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For immediate release

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) has given an award to a southern West Virginia Family Court Judge for her work protecting children from physical and sexual abuse.

Twelfth Family Court Circuit (McDowell and Mercer Counties) Judge Mary Ellen Griffith received a One With Courage Award, one of four awards bestowed Wednesday, April 13, at a luncheon at the WVCAN 2016 Conference at The Resort at Glade Springs in Daniels.

The other award recipients are Sgt. Melissa Clemons of Princeton, Professional With Courage Award; Dr. James Kaplan of Charleston, Partner With Courage Award; and Trudy Laurenson of Lewisburg, One With Courage Award.

Judge Griffith is a native of Nebraska who attended Concord College from 1972 to 1976. She has a 1976 bachelor's degree in education from Roger Williams College and a 1988 law degree with honors from West Virginia University College of Law.

Then-Governor Joe Manchin appointed Judge Griffith to the bench in 2006. She was elected in 2008. She oversees the Juvenile Drug Court in her circuit.

She worked at the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund in Princeton in 1988 to 1991 before entering private practice, during which time she was a partner at Bell & Griffith, LC, from 1990 to 2000. She became a member of the National Association of Counsel for Children in 1993 and began service on the West Virginia State Bar Commission on Children at its inception in 1994, eventually serving as chairwoman for ten years.

In 2001 she established Child Law Services Inc., the state's only legal service program for children.

She is a former trustee of the West Virginia State Bar's Client Protection Fund, chairwoman of the West Virginia State Bar Commission on Children and the Law, and a member of the West Virginia Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Work Group. She is also on the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Bar Foundation, West Virginia Court Improvement Program, and the Appalachian South Folklife Center.

She has won numerous awards for her work, including the United States Congress' Angel in Adoption Award, the Commissioner's Award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Children's Justice Task Force Award, the West Virginia Childcare

Association Award, and the West Virginia University Women's Law Caucus Award. She also is a West Virginia Bar Foundation Fellow.

WVCAN provides training, technical assistance, leadership, legislative and policy advocacy, and overall coordination to Child Advocacy Centers around the state. WVCAN's purpose is to empower local communities to provide comprehensive, coordinated, and compassionate services to victims of child abuse.

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