



The Proof in the Pudding -- Robes in Schools program inspires judges not just students

By Gail S. Tusan, Judge, Superior Court of Fulton County



Not long ago, I went on a field trip. 129 judges from municipal, state and federal courts joined me in stepping down from the bench and heading back to school. We spoke to young people in the metropolitan Atlanta area at their schools as part of a unique program called Robes in Schools.

The event, organized by the Just the Beginning Foundation (JTBF), a multiracial group of judges, lawyers and law professors committed to helping young people enter the legal profession. We shared our stories of overcoming obstacles as we seek to open pathways for talented minority students into the legal profession.

Young people may watch television judges like Judge Joe Brown, but we think it is time for them to meet real judges, hear about our lives, and learn how they can become members of our profession. After all, the proof is in the pudding, not the Nielsen Ratings.

Judge Myra H. Dixon co-chaired the program with Dawn Jones, an attorney with King & Spalding. My fellow panelists were Senior Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Nathaniel Jones, Fulton Superior Court Judge T. Jackson Bedford, Jr., and Fulton State Court Judge Myra H. Dixon.

My biggest take-away was the maturity and enthusiasm of the students. Two student organizations were our hosts: The Esquires, a group of young men not hesitant to come to school dressed in suits and ties and their female counterpart, Upendo Jaa Jaa, who donned their black twin sweater sets and pearls. They were articulate, focused and prepared to take the ball and run with it. I found them to be very poised, passionate, young professionals who were all about business and moving through and up the pipeline. In speaking with them, they all spoke confidently about the needs of their community and their future academic and career goals.

Fully aware that students need financial assistance to pursue their dream of attending college and entering law school, for the past several years, the Gate City Bar Association Judicial Section has raised funds and awarded scholarships to deserving students. On December 8, 2010, we will award our 2011-2012 scholarships to five very impressive high school seniors and one extraordinary college senior. We're confident that these six students are destined for greatness and will succeed through the pipeline from community and back thereto. With this in mind, we selected students with varied interests and backgrounds.

Joa O'Neal is a senior at **Carver Early College High School**. She volunteers with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, the Be a Match Foundation and Hands on Atlanta.

Tevin Williams, also a senior at **Carver**, is an honor roll student and a member of the National Honor Society. Tevin has been consistently involved with the Sandtown community Recreational Center Community Service Projects.

Ashanté Rosier-Robinson is a senior at Chamblee Charter High School. She is the secretary of her school's Student Government Association and a volunteer with Hosea Feed the Hungry and Hands on Atlanta.

Paul Harris, Jr. is a senior at **Carver**, where he currently stands as class Valedictorian. He is dually enrolled at **Georgia State University** and has been honored with the National Honor Society Leader Award as well as the President's List at GSU.

Chelsea Mitchell will graduate with her fellow scholarship recipients in May 2011 from **Carver Early College** ranked 4th in her senior class. Ever since she served as a lawyer in the case of The Three Little Bears v. Goldilocks while in the 5th grade, Chelsea knew she wanted to be a lawyer. She's previously participated in the Justice Robert Benham Summer Law Camp and is the recipient of the Girl Scouts of America Silver and Bronze award.

Christopher Preston is a senior Political Science major at Morehouse College; he is also the first male in his family to attend college. He is a Dean's List student who spent a summer studying at the London School of Economics.

To learn how you can participate in JTBF programs, contact Executive Director **Paula Lucas** at plucas@jtb.org or (312)258-5930.



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Judicial Section Chair

Chief Judge Allyson R. Pitts is a Detroit native and graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology.



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