

## **Community Juvenile Arbitration Program receives an award for its work on behalf of first-time juvenile offenders**

**Columbia, SC** – The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) recently awarded The Honorable Marc H. Westbrook Memorial *Excellence in Community Justice Award* to the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit’s Juvenile Arbitration Program, represented by Program Director Noah Moore and Circuit Solicitor Ralph E. Hoisington. The award was presented during the 2006 Annual South Carolina Solicitor's Conference in Myrtle Beach.

Juvenile Arbitration Programs provide fast-track accountability for first-time juvenile offenders charged with committing non-violent crimes. The programs are community-based and involve trained volunteers who serve as “arbitrators.” The volunteer arbitrators meet with juvenile offenders, family members, law enforcement, and crime victims to develop sanctions that hold the offenders accountable for their crimes and for the harm they have caused to their victims and community and, at the same time, divert at-risk youth from the juvenile justice system.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit’s program, covering Charleston and Berkley Counties, was recognized by a selection committee representing family court judges, solicitors, law enforcement officials, victims advocates, community members, and juvenile justice representatives from across the state. Over 1,300 juvenile offenders were given the opportunity to participate in the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit’s program last year. Committee members were impressed with the program’s excellent volunteer recruitment record, strong partnerships with law enforcement and local community organizations, as well as the employment of a full-time victim advocate



*Director of Juvenile Diversion Programs Noah Moore and Ninth Circuit Solicitor Ralph E. Hoisington accept the Marc H. Westbrook Award for Excellence in Community Justice*



*Director of Juvenile Diversion Programs Noah Moore and Assistant Director Christine Kinney accept the Marc H. Westbrook Award for Excellence in Community Justice*

on staff.

"This program clearly illustrates the principles of balanced and restorative justice," said Dr. Karry Guillory, DJJ Deputy Director for Community Services. "It holds the kids accountable for their crimes and helps to teach them what they did wrong and how that affects their victims and community. It also gives our state's solicitors a good option for first-time offenders, to keep kids out of our prison system who don't belong there."

The Honorable Marc H. Westbrook Memorial *Excellence in Community Justice Award* is named in honor of the late 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Judge Marc H. Westbrook, who once served as a Family Court Judge and helped to establish the state's first Juvenile Arbitration Program in Lexington County.

Fifteen of South Carolina's sixteen judicial circuits currently offer Juvenile Arbitration Programs. The programs are operated by circuit solicitors, in conjunction with state juvenile justice officials and circuit family courts.

As the state agency responsible for providing rehabilitation and custodial care for the state's juveniles who are on probation, incarcerated, or on parole for a criminal or status offense, DJJ actively seeks partnerships that foster its mission. That mission supports the Governor's mission by protecting the public and reclaiming juveniles through prevention, community programs, education and rehabilitative services in the least restrictive environment.