



Eighteenth Judicial Circuit

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SEMINOLE COUNTY JUDGE JOHN WOODARD HONORED BY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, FLORIDA CHAPTER

The Central Florida Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) recently recognized **Seminole County Judge John L. Woodard III** at their annual awards dinner held at the UCF College of Health and Public Affairs on March 19. Judge Woodard was named "Elected Official of the Year" for his tireless efforts on behalf of Seminole County's Drug and Veterans Courts. Attorney and former social worker Laura Sterling presented the award to Judge Woodard, citing his commitment to providing better, more effective solutions for non-violent offenders in the justice system.

Judge Woodard launched the pilot program for Seminole County's first Veterans Court in 2012. Under his leadership, the program was awarded a Bureau of Justice Assistance Discretionary Grant in the amount of \$348,000. Judge Woodard recognized the need for the specialized court as a substantial number of veterans, when arrested, were under the influence of drugs or alcohol or were arrested on drug-related charges.

The Veterans Treatment Court is a hybrid Drug Court/Mental Health Court model for veterans that features regular court appearances, mandatory attendance at treatment sessions, and frequent and random testing for drug and/or alcohol use. "These specialized court programs are labor intensive and require the coordination and support of several community stakeholders," says Chief Judge John M. Harris. "But the return on the investment is immeasurable. Thanks to Judge Woodard, hundreds of people are getting the help they need to break the cycle of addiction and keep them from reoffending."

Each year NASW honors an elected official who has demonstrated exceptional leadership in public policies that affect social justice, health care, education, and civil and human rights. Past honorees include 18th Circuit Judge John Galluzzo and Circuit Judge Lawrence Kirkwood of the Ninth Circuit.

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