



## CHIEF JUSTICE'S COMMISSION ON PROFESSIONALISM

### PRESS RELEASE

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Executive Director

**Atlanta, GA.** The 20th Annual Justice Robert Benham Awards for Community Service was held on Saturday, March 9, 2019, at a special ceremony. Since 1998, these awards have been presented to honor lawyers and judges in Georgia who have made significant contributions to their communities and demonstrate the positive contributions of members of the Bar beyond their legal or official work.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is the highest recognition given by the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, sponsor of the Justice Robert Benham Awards for Community Service. This year it was awarded posthumously to two outstanding community and public servants, The Honorable P. Harris Hines of Marietta and The Honorable Willie J. Lovett, Jr. of Atlanta. This award is reserved for a lawyer or judge who, in addition to meeting the criteria for receiving the Justice Robert Benham Award for Community Service, has demonstrated an extraordinarily long and distinguished commitment to volunteer participation in the community throughout his or her legal career.

Awards are given to selected attorneys in the judicial districts of Georgia from which nominations were received. This year's other recipients were: Mr. Robert F. Mikell, *Statesboro*; Mr. Christopher Cohilas, *Albany*; Ms. Christina Folsom, *Valdosta*; Ms. Cheryl L. Milton, *Macon*; The Honorable Clarence F. Seeliger, *Decatur*; Mr. Gordon Lane Joyner, *Atlanta*; Ms. Deepa Subramanian, *Atlanta*; Ms. Stephanie Leigh Steele, *Marietta*; Ms. Julia Greene, *Gainesville*; Ms. Regina Michalle Quick, *Athens*.

These honorees have served a wide range of community organizations, government-sponsored activities, and humanitarian efforts outside of their professional practices and judicial duties. Their fields of service include: youth athletics and mentoring programs, literacy programs, social services, church and religious activities, politics, promotion and support for legal aid programs, community development, education, sports, recreation, and the arts. These awards recognize the commitment of Georgia lawyers and judges to volunteerism, encourage all lawyers and judges to become involved in community service, improve the quality of lawyers' lives through the satisfaction they derive from helping others, and raise the public image of lawyers and judges. All honorees are members of the State Bar of Georgia. The Selection Committee was chaired by Janet G. Watts of Watts & Watts, Jonesboro, Georgia.

The 20th Annual Justice Robert Benham Awards for Community Service were presented as follows:

Saturday, March 9, 2019  
Doors Open at 6:30 p.m.  
Awards Dinner beginning at 7:00 p.m.  
Georgia State University Student Center East, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Ballroom  
55 Gilmer Street, SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

The awards were presented by Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Harold D. Melton, former Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Benham, and the Commission's Executive Director, Karlise Y. Grier. Attorney Joshua I. Bosin and Georgia State University College of Law 2019 J.D. Candidate, Racquel V. McGee, served as Master and Mistress of Ceremonies. State Bar President The Honorable Kenneth B. Hodges III, Judge of the Georgia Court of Appeals and State Bar YLD President, The Honorable Rizza O'Connor, Chief Magistrate Court Judge of Toombs County, brought greetings on behalf of the State Bar of Georgia. Over 300 people registered for the event, which was free and open to the public.

In keeping with Justice Benham's desire to foster camaraderie between lawyers and judges and to show the talents of lawyers and judges beyond their legal work, the State Bar's Creative Connections Sub-Committee of the Committee on Professionalism, chaired by Joshua I. Bosin, secured lawyer and judge volunteers to display their artistic talents during the awards ceremony. Confirmed musical entertainment for the Creative Connections portion of the program included: Norman Barnett, Laurel Boatright, Kevin Wilson, Abbey Martin, and several other members of the Atlanta Bar Association Bard Show Performers; The Honorable Chung Lee and the Korean American Saxophone Ensemble; Judge Gail Tusan and "Always Wanted to Dance"; Patricia Buonodono, Brad Ketch, and GSU Law Student, Vonciel T. Bryant. Confirmed visual artists included: Rosalind Rubens Newell, O.V. Brantley, and award recipient Cheryl L. Milton (quilts); Phil Sandick (photography) and Judge Phinia Aten (painting). The "after party" entertainment featured the Specific Deviations Band (Cobb County Superior Court Judge LaTain Kell, Vic Valmus, Jeremy Abernathy, John Lyndon, and a few others). Once again this year, Commission member, Judge Carla Wong McMillian, served as the Commission's "Guest Tweeter." Volunteer, Attorney Jena Emory, served as the Commission's guest tweeter photographer. In 2019, the Commission also spearheaded a community service project as part of the awards ceremony, thanks to a suggestion from Commission member, The Honorable Susan Edlein, Judge of the State Court of Fulton County. The Commission created 30 food baskets that were used as table centerpieces. The food staples in the baskets were donated to the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Approximately 100 lawyers, judges and other legal professionals volunteered to make the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Justice Robert Benham Awards for Community Service a

huge success. Finally, the Awards Ceremony would not have been possible without the generous assistance of all of the sponsors as follows.

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