

Justice Teaching trainers hit the road

110 new volunteers were prepared for the classroom

This summer, judges and attorneys alike rallied toward the [Justice Teaching](#) goal of having an attorney or judge volunteer paired with every public school in Florida.

Live training sessions were again conducted by Justice R. Fred Lewis and Annette Boyd Pitts, executive director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, at three locales across the state.

The first training was hosted by Hillsborough County Court Judge Raul Palomino at the Edgecomb County Courthouse in Tampa. Judge Palomino provided a complimentary luncheon to all presenters and trainees. During the luncheon, volunteers Kenneth Tinkler, Renee Pelzman-Ruska, and Kimberly Lee shared with the trainees their positive experiences as Justice Teaching volunteers.

Four employees from the public school system, Tony Gentile, Robin Jackson, Rupert Warren, and Karen Wilkins, also spoke about the valuable impact of Justice Teaching on their students and schools.



Another training session, held at the Broward County Courthouse in Ft. Lauderdale, was arranged and hosted by 17th Judicial Circuit Court Judge Thomas Lynch IV. After the training, the new volunteers moved to Cinema Paradiso, the only full-time art house theatre in Broward County, for a social reception. Coral Gables attorney Eli Kaplan provided hors d'oeuvres for the event and shared his Justice Teaching experiences. Also speaking about Justice Teaching during the reception were attorneys Laurie Marks, Kathleen Bonczyk, and Todd Clarke, as well as teachers Melissa Sirin, Wendy Wuenker, and Ronna Brown.

A third training session, organized and hosted by Seventh Judicial Circuit Court Judge Margaret Hudson, with assistance from the Volusia County Bar Association, was held at the

Museum of Arts and Sciences in Daytona Beach. After the training, a reception arranged by VCBA Executive Director Kathie Selover was held in the gallery of the museum.

Seventh Judicial Circuit Court Judge Belle Schumann and St. Augustine attorney Megan Wall spoke about the gratification of serving as a Justice Teaching volunteer.

Mill Creek Elementary School Principal Mary Ford, who traveled from St. Johns County after work, spoke about Justice Teaching at her school and praised Wall as the dedicated volunteer who routinely visits the classrooms of Mill Creek. Justice Teaching has had a real impact on her students, Ford said.

By the time the sessions concluded, a total of 110 new Justice Teaching volunteers had been trained in both existing and new Justice Teaching lesson plans. That so many judges and attorneys were willing to take time from their hectic workdays — either to organize the sessions, to attend training, or to speak to new trainees — reflects the strength of Justice Teaching in Florida's legal community, Pitts said.

"Each of the judges and attorneys who participated in these trainings and social events acted selflessly to further the goal that every child in the Florida public school system should have the opportunity to experience civic education and constitutional law," Pitts said. "It is the Justice Teaching volunteers and the local Justice Teaching coordinator judges statewide who are the unsung heroes of this program. The real work is in each local community."

There are still a few public schools in Florida that need Justice Teaching volunteers. If you are interested in making a difference for Florida's children, visit www.justiceteaching.org.