

2016 Citizen Lawyers: Judge Rickye McKoy-Mitchell

By Leah M. Hermiller

CHARLOTTE – As lawyers, we consciously act with a vision of the greater good in mind. However, some of us go beyond the bounds of good conscience and step into the realm of a citizen lawyer. A citizen lawyer lends their fortitude, courage, and determination to the public, embarking on a life-long journey of service to their communities, the rule of law, and reforms to enhance the law's efficiency, fairness, and accessibility.

The North Carolina Bar Association is proud to recognize Judge Rickye McKoy-Mitchell with its Citizen Lawyer Award. Judge McKoy-Mitchell has served as a District Court Judge in the 26th Judicial District since 1998. She has dedicated her life's work to enriching our youth, specifically focusing on children involved in the welfare and court systems. Throughout her career on the bench, Judge McKoy-Mitchell has presided in every facet of District Court and served as a Lead Judge and community task force member. Currently, Judge McKoy-Mitchell presides in criminal administrative, child support, civil and criminal domestic violence, and juvenile administrative court.

Judge McKoy-Mitchell's service to the community extends far beyond the bench. She is a recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, one of the State's most prestigious awards. Judge McKoy-Mitchell received the award as an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She was and still is one of the youngest recipients of the award. Judge McKoy-Mitchell is also a recipient of the Carolina Law Alumni Association's 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award in recognition of her "accomplishments and contributions that have enhanced the school and the profession of law...upholding the high ideals of the legal profession."

Dedicated to seeking reforms to enhance the law's efficiency, fairness, and accessibility, Judge McKoy-Mitchell strives to achieve a partnership between the bench and the community. Judge McKoy-Mitchell was a long-standing Chair of the Bench, Bar, and Community Subcommittee of the Mecklenburg County Bar. She was also a Board Member for the Children's Law Center and has spearheaded community legal clinics and community clean-up events. Judge McKoy-Mitchell is the founder of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated's Excellence in Youth Program. Since 1998, the program has recognized over 4,000 eighth graders for their academic and athletic/artistic accomplishments.

"It is because of my own background that I could have been a child "at risk"...it is that understanding and connectedness that also drive me to demonstrate and ensure that these young people see their possibilities." Judge McKoy-Mitchell, we commend your fortitude, courage, and determination.

The Citizen Lawyer Committee of the NCBA Young Lawyers Division, in conjunction with the NCBA Citizen Lawyer Committee, provides expanded coverage of the 2016

Citizen Lawyer Awards in recognition of their volunteer service and leadership in their communities and beyond.

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