

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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Nebraska Invited to Showcase Programming at National Conference of Chief Justices and State Court Administrators During 2012 Annual Meeting



The PEOPLE (Public Education Outreach Promoting Law & Equity) Committee was recently invited to showcase two of Nebraska's unique community education programs during the recent Conference of Chief Justices civics fair in St. Louis.

The two programs, selected for their distinctive features, were the annual 5th Grade Job Shadow program and the journalist education sessions which consist of brown bag luncheons, regional seminars and appellate coverage roundtables. The programs represent one project from each of the two PEOPLE subcommittees: Media Outreach and Student Law Related Education (LRE).

"We are honored to be one of a handful of states selected to showcase our community outreach projects to this distinguished audience," said PEOPLE Committee Chairman Judge Lyle Strom. "The educational partnership between the State Bar Foundation and the Supreme Court has benefitted Nebraskans, both youth and adults, across the state," he added.

Immediately prior to the Chief Justices' civics fair, all Justices and State Court Administrators attended a seminar regarding the importance of the court system's participation in civics education. Seminar panelist West Virginia State Court Administrator, Steven Canterbury, remarked that "We will lose the Democracy if we don't have people educated in how democracy works." He continued that one of the largest challenges comes through implementation of standardized testing in schools, given that national standards do not include civics education. He stated, "We can either wait around to see if things change, or we can just get in and try to do our part – that is what the judges of West Virginia have been trying to do."

The civics fair itself consisted of a dozen state organizations and a handful of private civic education programs that were selected to share programming with the nationwide audience of Chief Justices and State Court Administrators who attended the seminar.

In his introduction of the program, Conference of Chief Justices President Eric T. Washington noted that the Chief Justices deviated from their normal agenda by presenting civics information through an interactive setting. He noted, "We are hosting a civics education fair to showcase the variety of programs that exist and are developed by Courts and other organizations throughout the country. The organizations that have put

them together are here to let us know that we don't have to start from scratch, that there are programs out there that we can learn from, and learn about."

Nebraska's jointly held LRE programs are organized under the Supreme Court and the State Bar Foundation's Public Education Outreach Promoting Law & Equity Committee. The purpose of the PEOPLE committee is to help judges, foundation members and volunteer personnel develop skills in public outreach, community collaboration, community leadership, and public service.



The Nebraska State Bar Foundation is Nebraska's designated State Center for Law-Related Education by Youth for Justice, a cooperative program supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the United States Department of Justice. The Foundation sponsors the Nebraska High School Mock Trial Project, the Reaching the Age of Majority booklet, and various Law Day celebration activities, as well

as newly emerging LRE programs and projects.

The Committee also, led by Judge Lyle Strom, addresses both youth and adult law-related education. The LRE Program subcommittees support current programs and review proposed additions. Subcommittee members make recommendations to the Foundation Executive Committee or the Supreme Court for new programming opportunities that further judicial outreach. The Media subcommittee develops materials for spokespersons to communicate with the media, recruits lawyers state-wide to act as spokespersons if necessary, and educates members of the media (reporters and editors) and journalism classes (high school and post-secondary) about the role of the judiciary. In recent years, the subcommittee has extended its mission to include educating voters and jurors.

Photos

TOP: (L to R) Conference participant reviews materials offered at the Nebraska Civics Education Fair booth with Public Information Officer Janet Bancroft, Nebraska State Court Administrator Janice Walker, Chief Justice Mike Heavican and State Bar Foundation Executive Director Doris Huffman.

BOTTOM: Public Information Officer Janet Bancroft (right) and State Bar Foundation Executive Director Doris Huffman (center) interviewed by National Center for State Courts videographer for podcast.