

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH: DIVERSE PROGRAMS FOR A DIVERSE AUDIENCE



THE JUDICIARY'S OUTREACH PROGRAMS CONNECT COURTS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES BRING TEACHERS, STUDENTS, PARENTS, LAWYERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND THE MEDIA INTO THE COURTS TO INTERACT WITH JUDGES AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM. THE PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED TO IMPROVE COURT LITERACY, TO PUT A HUMAN FACE ON THE JUDICIARY, AND TO INCREASE CITIZENS' WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN JURY DUTY. THE JUDICIARY HAS UNDERTAKEN SEVERAL INITIATIVES AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL.

Interactive Programs That Create Real-Life Learning Situations at Courthouses

The flagship of the federal courts' national outreach program is the annual Open Doors to Federal Courts initiative and the teachers' institutes that support the program. Judges from all circuits host students from their local high schools for true-to-life simulations related to jury service, judicial independence, the Bill of Rights, and careers in the justice system. The Office of Public Affairs of the Administrative Office of the United States (AO) provides everything needed to make each national event a turnkey operation.

Courthouse Coordinators' Network to Implement Programs

Since 1999, the judiciary has initiated and cultivated a national network of local outreach coordinators. Today, more than 300 coordinators take responsibility for national and local outreach efforts hosted at their courthouses. The AO provides them with resources, guidance, and professional development to help them match the talents of their courts with the needs of their communities.

Multimedia Resources That Offer Original Interactive Educational Experiences

Resources for judges and teachers are available through the following media: the "Educational Outreach" pages of the judiciary's Web site, a CD-ROM, publications, and an online courthouse coordinators' kit for each event that is part of the Open Doors to Federal Courts initiative. Other

resources include lesson plans, a sample courthouse tour script, interactive games, mock trials, as well as materials for Law Day, Juror Appreciation Month, and Constitution and Citizenship Day.

Classroom Materials That Reach Thousands of Classroom Teachers Annually

Every year, 6,000 middle school and high school teachers across the nation benefit from new classroom-ready materials that are specific to the federal courts. Teachers visit the courts' outreach exhibit at social studies conferences, where they can offer input and receive curriculum samples. Special topics for court programs come from the information that is gathered and include courtroom and classroom materials on such topics as texting while driving, downloading music and movies from the Internet, a police search of a teen house party, and First Amendment issues of concern to students.

Bankruptcy Court Initiative

In collaboration with U.S. Bankruptcy Court judges and staff, the AO has produced a national financial literacy initiative that local courts may use to supplement a growing number of successful programs initiated by the court.

To learn more about the various programs available, visit the "Educational Outreach" pages on the judiciary's Web site www.uscourts.gov/outreach/index.html. **TFL**