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NEWS RELEASE

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Circuit Judge John M. Alexander awarded statewide dependency court honor

St. Augustine – Circuit Judge John M. Alexander has received the statewide William E. Gladstone Award for his work in the St. Johns County juvenile dependency court. Alexander, a judge since 1997, was presented with the award at the Florida Department of Children and Families dependency summit in Orlando Aug. 28.

Named after retired Circuit Judge William E. Gladstone from Miami-Dade, the award celebrates the significant contributions of a judge or magistrate in dependency court. Alexander is the second judge from the Seventh Judicial Circuit to be honored with a Gladstone Award. Circuit Judge Julianne Piggotte, who's based in Daytona Beach, received the award in 2000.

"It's really quite remarkable – his administrative abilities and his innovation," Gladstone said. "The children of this state are blessed to have him."

Judges in juvenile dependency court hear cases involving allegations of abuse, abandonment and/or neglect. In addition to dependency cases, Alexander presides over family and juvenile delinquency cases at the Richard O. Watson Judicial Center in St. Augustine. He's also served on various statewide juvenile and family court committees.

"I'm honored to accept this award on behalf of the team we've assembled here in St. Johns County," Alexander said, adding that many entities are involved in dependency cases.

"Dependency court puts the power to transform the family into a productive unit in the hands of the family, especially the parents. The Court directs them to necessary services that will stabilize the family. If the parents comply, the children return to the parents and the family is kept intact," Alexander said.

"Every day, society pays the consequences for broken families -- juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, among others. By preserving the family unit under strict conditions, we can break this destructive cycle and give kids a chance to have a productive life - with either their family members or if no suitable family exists, by placing them in a loving adoptive home," he said.

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