

# E-SJI News

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## BOARD APPROVES GRANTS FOR THE THIRD QUARTER

The SJI Board of Directors met in Alexandria, Virginia, on June 27, 2008, to review applications for the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2008. Four (4) Project Grants, 6 Technical Assistance (TA) Grants, and 1 Curriculum Adaptation & Training (CAT) Grant were approved, for a total of \$510,811.

As of the third quarter of FY 2008, SJI has awarded 9 Project Grants totaling \$771,812; 3 Partner Grants totaling \$607,000; 2 Strategic Initiatives Grants totaling \$448,168; 16 TA Grants totaling \$430,476; and 6 CAT Grants totaling \$87,997; for a grand total of \$2,345,453. Total match as of the third quarter of FY 2008 is \$1,881,869. SJI has also awarded a grand total of \$152,705 for 113 Scholarships as of the third quarter.

Included in the awarded Project Grants are projects to support court-based training to improve the identification of human trafficking victims in New York City, and an evaluation of truancy court models in Maryland. Six (6) TA applications were approved by the Board, including support for court security training in Arkansas, emergency planning in Georgia, and an initiative to improve the diversity of court staff in Minnesota. One (1) CAT Grant was approved that will allow the Virginia courts to develop a faculty of judicial education trainers using existing staff, thereby saving on outside training costs.

## BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE AND SJI PARTNER ON DRUG COURT TRAINING

SJI recently finalized a Partner Grant with the Department of Justice/Office of Justice Programs/Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), for the Drug Court Planning Initiative; a BJA-funded training initiative that helps communities implement effective drug court programs. The Drug Court Planning Initiative is designed to fulfill three interconnected goals for the state or local drug court teams: 1) educate the team on the basic concepts of drug courts, including information on building the components of a drug court; 2) provide the team with the fundamental skills necessary for the paradigm shift from standard case processing to drug court case processing; (continued on page 2)

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and 3) encourage and educate the team to build their program with an emphasis on cultural competency, while integrating the court and treatment programs. As in prior years, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) will develop and deliver this training to drug court teams seeking to implement a drug court in their jurisdictions.

This Partner Grant will allow BJA and SJI to leverage the funds available for training drug court planning teams. These combined resources will enable drug court teams who have limited resources to attend the training; and/or enable additional drug court teams, who would not have been included prior to the Partner Grant, to receive training.

BJA and SJI are continuing to work together on various projects impacting the courts. This Partner Grant marks the second year BJA and SJI have combined resources to support a project, and SJI is looking forward to future efforts.

## JUSTICE SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR ADDRESSES CIVIC EDUCATION FOR THE NATION'S YOUTH



Justice O'Connor has been voicing her concern that young people are not learning what they need to know to become knowledgeable and active participants in civic life. Only a little more than one-third of Americans can name the three branches of government; two-thirds know as least one of the judges on the Fox television show *American Idol*, but less than one-in-ten can identify the Chief Justice of the United States. To address this issue, Justice O'Connor has launched the *Our Courts* project. *Our Courts* will be a free, interactive, web-based program and eventually a 3D world designed to teach middle-school students in civics and the courts. *Our Courts* will allow students to participate in realistic situations, including investigating and arguing actual cases using real law. Furthermore, they will view these cases from the perspective of the judicial, legislative, and executive branches.

Experts in education, law, history, and technology from the Georgetown University Law Center and Arizona State University were recruited by Justice O'Connor for this project. The *Our Courts* staff has built a curriculum that is problem-oriented and discovery-based, and that addresses issues important to youth. *Our Courts* has two components: 1) classroom – includes a series of activities to be used as a complete civics curriculum, or as a supplement to existing curriculums; 2) simulation – hypothetical or actual cases will be presented which will allow students to engage in a case from start to finish. The second phase of *Our Courts*, to be rolled out in 2010, will be embedded in a 3D virtual world built on the principles of electronic gaming. This component is intended for use in educational venues as well as home computers. *Our Courts* will maximize opportunities for civic learning to prepare youth for civic participation, including participation in the nation's judiciary.

**(continued on page 3)**

The *Our Courts* website can be found at <http://www.ourcourts.org>.

For more information about this project and other topics, please visit the *Sandra Day O'Connor Project of the State of the Judiciary*: <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/judiciary>.

SJI is aware that many state and local courts are looking to develop linkages in the schools. *Our Courts* may provide a way for state and local courts to engage in these civic activities using an existing curriculum, thereby saving time and funding where there are limited resources.

## NEW CURRICULUM HELPS IMPROVE ACCESS FOR THE SELF-REPRESENTED

Courts and judges are continuing to focus on changing court systems and practices to improve access to justice for self-represented litigants. To assist in these efforts, the Self-Represented Litigation Network has developed a judicial curriculum and leadership package that is designed to share the latest innovations. The curriculum and leadership package was developed with funding from two SJI grants (SJI-05-N-091-C06-1 and SJI-07-N-057). They include PowerPoint slides, detailed faculty notes, an activity handbook – which describes activities that assist in understanding the underlying issues surrounding self-represented litigants, and a resource handbook.

In 2006 and 2007, the Self-Represented Litigation Network, with support from SJI and the Maryland and California AOCs, conducted video-based observations into the effectiveness of communication between judges and self-represented litigants. The observations revealed high levels of communications between judges and the self-represented litigants. Furthermore, a number of techniques were documented that were effective in making sure that self-represented litigants were able to present to the judge the facts needed to decide the case. The curriculum includes detailed descriptions of these techniques, as well as an analysis of the need for judicial engagement with self-represented litigants.

The Court Leadership Package (which can also be used as a curriculum), contains 15 modules, each containing training on how to use innovation to improve service to the self-represented litigant. Both the curriculum and leadership package can be accessed at [www.selfhelpsupport.org](http://www.selfhelpsupport.org). The video used for this project, which is restricted to judicial education use, can be obtained by courts from the Knowledge and Information Services of the National Center for State Courts.

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The State Justice Institute is a private, nonprofit corporation established by Federal law in 1984 to improve the quality of justice in state courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts. SJI is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Next grant and scholarship application deadline: August 1, 2008.
- The SJI website includes a new link that provides more details about grant and scholarship deadlines. More information can be found using the following link: <http://www.sji.gov/deadlines.php>.
- The next Board meeting is September 19, 2008 (4<sup>th</sup> QTR, FY 2008).

## STATUS OF FY 2009 APPROPRIATIONS

On June 19, 2008, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Bill (S 3182), which includes \$5 million for SJI in FY 2009. SJI greatly appreciates the Senate's support, and will have more information about the FY 2009 appropriations process, including the House Appropriations Committee's funding level for SJI, in next month's E-SJI News.

If you would like to be added to the monthly E-SJI News distribution list, please email [esjinews@sji.gov](mailto:esjinews@sji.gov) and provide your first and last name.

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