

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

The Child Advocacy Award

By Krima D. Shah

In 1990, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD), in conjunction with the Center on Children and the Law, established the Child Advocacy Award to honor lawyers for distinguished service on behalf of children. The awards

- recognize the contributions to the legal profession by child advocates who have actively labored on behalf of children and
- celebrate the often unheralded service that child advocates bring to children and the legal profession.

Any lawyer or judge involved in child advocacy is eligible. The ABA YLD Child Advocacy Award is given to individuals, based on their personal achievements and commitment. It is not given to groups of people, organizations, or posthumously. Those nominated for the award in the past but not selected can be nominated again.

The Division hands out one award for each category:

- Young Lawyer (on September 1, 2011; the individual must be less than thirty-six years of age or admitted to practice in his or her first bar within the past five years);
- Non-Young Lawyer (on September 1, 2011; the individual must be thirty-six or more years of age or admitted to practice in his or her first bar more than five years ago); and
- The winner in each category will be recognized at the ABA YLD Assembly on Saturday, August 6, 2011, during the ABA Annual Meeting in Toronto, Canada.

Deadlines

- **April 30, 2011:** Deadline for all nominations and letters of recommendation.
- **May 21, 2011:** Winners selected and all nominees and nominators will be notified of outcome.

Nomination Process

The nomination form must be received no later than April 30 (*as one document in either PDF or Microsoft Word format*). **Total submission must not exceed 10 pages. Nominations received by fax will not be considered.**

The nomination must include the following items:

- a completed ABA YLD Child Advocacy Award nomination form (*available by February 15, 2011*);
- a nomination letter from a nominator explaining the qualifications of the nominee and setting forth the reasons why the nominee should be awarded the ABA YLD Child Advocacy Award;
- the nominee's biographical resume, including an explanation of the nominee's legal service on behalf of children, employment, and professional history; and
- up to three letters of recommendation. Examples include letters from the nominee's clients, individuals familiar with the nominee's service on behalf of children, the nominee's current or former employers, fellow practitioners, or any other individual who can explain why the nominee should receive the ABA YLD Child Advocacy Award.

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2009–2010 Winners

Each year two lawyers are honored for their distinguished service on behalf of children. Award recipients are selected based on the individual's personal achievement and commitment to child advocacy. Both winners were recognized at the Young Lawyers Division Assembly on Saturday, August 7, 2010, at the ABA Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California. The 2009–2010 recipients are:

Young Lawyer Category

Angela Ciolfi
Legal Director, JustChildren
Charlottesville, Virginia

Angela Ciolfi is the Legal Director of JustChildren, a program of the Legal Aid Justice Center that focuses on improving Virginia's public education, juvenile justice, and foster care systems. Her work for the program as a law student earned her the Oliver White Hill Award from the Virginia State Bar in 2003. She joined JustChildren as a Powell Fellow in 2004 after clerking for U.S. District Judge Reginald C. Lindsay. Angela is a graduate of The College of William and Mary and the University of Virginia School of Law, where she was a member of the *Virginia Law Review*, was elected to the Raven Society and Order of the Coif, and won the VTLA Trial Advocacy Award, James C. Slaughter Honor Award, and the Pro Bono Award.

At JustChildren, Angela has worked with a team of attorneys and organizers to develop and implement innovative strategies for strengthening the educational rights and opportunities of all students, including students with disabilities and students who are incarcerated, through policy advocacy and litigation. She has also provided individual legal representation to children and families in the areas of special education, student discipline, enrollment of special populations, dispositional advocacy for court-involved youth, conditions of confinement, and post-conviction relief for serious youth offenders and provided training, advocacy materials, and technical assistance on education law to lawyers and service providers statewide. Angela is also a Lecturer at the University of Virginia School of Law where she teaches a seminar on Special Education Law and supervises students in the Child Advocacy Clinic.

Non-Young Lawyer Category

Alfreda D. Coward
Partner, Coward & Coward, P.A.
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Alfreda D. Coward is a partner in Coward & Coward, P.A., a law firm in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She practices with her sister, Kimberly D. Coward, primarily representing indigent clients in the areas of criminal law and family law. During her fifteen years as an attorney, Ms. Coward has had well over 100 jury trials. Some of these trials were recorded and aired on Court TV, MSNBC, and NBC Dateline.

In addition to Coward & Coward, Ms. Coward currently serves as the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the One Voice Children's Law Center. One Voice Children's Law Center is a nonprofit organization that represents kids that have pending matters in the dependency, delinquency, or educational systems. She also served as an Adjunct Professor at Florida International University College of Law teaching educational advocacy.

Ms. Coward is a graduate of the University of Florida, where she received a J.D. in 1995 and a B.S. in Psychology in 1992. She is a member of the Florida Bar and is admitted to practice in the U.S. District Courts for the Northern, Middle, and Southern Districts of Florida.

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If you have questions about the ABA YLD Child Advocacy Award, please contact ABA YLD Program Associate, Renee Lugo, at lugo@staff.abanet.org or 312/988-5626.

Krima D. Shah is an Assistant Editor of The Affiliate and in private practice in Ridgely Park, New Jersey.