

We were regretting his eventual announcement of retirement but found comfort in his desire to serve one day in a retired judge status. But nothing prepared us for his death and the loss that his absence has created in our community. Judge Jones was an iconic leader at the Juvenile Court and roamed the halls at lunchtime motivating and engaging court staff, DFCS workers, police officers and community service providers - always checking in to see what is going on and offering ideas and assistance. He took time for everyone, offering words of gratitude and encouragement to those who cleaned the bathrooms, cooked the cafeteria food, guarded the front doors, waited for rides in the atrium, typed the orders, raised funds for programs, guided children on probation, supervised family visits, hosted learning clubs and tutoring, provided legal representation, fixed the air conditioning, waxed the floors, and answered the phones. No matter your position or duties at the court, Judge Jones made time for you and made you feel appreciated and valued. His leadership reached beyond the court as well. He demonstrated strong community leadership as Vice President of the Fulton County Board of Education, President of the Georgia Council of Juvenile Court Judges, Chairman of the Atlanta Bar Judicial Section, Director of the Justice Center of Atlanta, Chairman of the Georgia Mental Health Forensic Task Force, and Chairman of the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

He has also helped to educate many students through his role as pro hac professor for the Emory School of Psychiatry and many single parent mothers affected by substance abuse through his role as Family Drug Court Judge.

Some of his greatest accomplishments have been achieved since coming onto the bench at Juvenile Court in 1992. Under his leadership, the court has developed numerous alternatives to detention and treatment programs in an effort to prevent delinquent activities and to reduce recidivism. Most unique is Judge Jones' success in making the court more accessible to receiving community involvement. He placed particular emphasis on community involvement through the use of task forces, faith-based initiatives, and extensive partnerships with outside agencies and entities. Judge Jones knew that parents, foster parents, DFCS, Probation Officers, and Court personnel could not help our children on their own. He knew that the children in the court needed community support – mentors, tutors, advocates, treatment, parent-to-parent mentors, and enrichment programs. The court presently has well over 600 volunteers and several non-profit corporations developed by the court for the purpose of providing on-going services to children that are not normally sanctioned through government budget process. This community model is unique for juvenile court. Most juvenile courts nationwide are weighted by the confidentiality required for cases and proceedings involving minor children. While most juvenile courts nationwide have put up a host of barriers and safeguards to exclude the community from access to confidential case information and thereby exclude them from serving and supporting the children in these cases --- Judge Jones managed to open up our juvenile court to readily receive help offered in the community while still balancing and ensuring the legal requirements of confidentiality for minor children in the juvenile justice system. He could often be heard stating "We have to help these children and we need the community to help us help them, so lets figure out how we can make this happen. We have to stop spending time thinking about all the reasons why we can't do things for our kids. They deserve more from us."

### **Special Programs:**

Judge Jones has been instrumental in helping to establish the Juvenile Justice Fund – the non-profit at the court that helps to identify and meet the needs of those most underserved youth and family populations at the court – these include establishing the Center to End Adolescent Sexual Exploitation (CEASE), Angela’s House, Educational Advocate Program, Multi-Systemic Therapy Program, Family Visitation Centers, Project Ready, Set, Go (a transition, aftercare, and connections program expanding Family Drug Court services and support) and CACTIS (Child Abuse Case Tracking Information System). He has worked hard to ensure the success of Fulton County CASA, Truancy Intervention Project (TIP) of Georgia, the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy, Citizen’s Panel Review, Community Restorative Boards, Family Drug Court Program, Youth Learning Club, Sister-to-Sister, YES Atlanta, Atlanta Fulton Family Connection Partnership, and a variety of evening and weekend programs for children and families.

Judge Jones loved to bring people together and celebrate the work and lives of children and families. He enhanced the annual Fulton County National Adoption Day Celebration and annual fall Volunteer Appreciation Reception. He had a twinkle in his eye and a sense of humor that made him a favorite to open or close any event. He could leave a room full of people feeling happy, hopeful, and excited to serve the community.

Judge Jones was working on two projects with the Juvenile Justice Fund before he passed away. Ironically both were “Playground” projects. One was a documentary entitled “Playground.” The film is executive produced by George Clooney, Grant Heslov, and Steven Soderbergh. It unravels the gut-wrenching atrocities suffered by children who are victims of the American sex trafficking industry. While filming in Atlanta, Judge Jones was instrumental in giving the crew access to the people, places and cases that shone the brightest light on the problem of the prostitution and sexual exploitation of girls in Atlanta. He was fully committed to the project and he himself appears in the film. Just five days before he died, on Sunday afternoon, Judge Jones was helping to plan the documentary film premiere in Atlanta. The production company has been greatly appreciative of all Judge Jones’ efforts. When they learned of his untimely death, they decided to honor his memory by screening PLAYGROUND in Atlanta this fall and directing the proceeds from the event to benefit the Juvenile Justice Fund and Judge Jones’ efforts to address and combat the issues surrounding the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The production company has also put together a 7 minute film from the footage taken of Judge Jones and they will share this mini-film as a tribute to Judge Jones at the premiere event.

The second project was the building of a real playground facility in the courtyard of the Juvenile Court building. In a letter of support to the Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation he wrote:

*I have served this court many years as Presiding Judge and Chief Judge, and the only event that I believe could match or exceed the excitement of the day that we opened this new court facility in 2002, would be the ribbon cutting ceremony for a playground.*

*When we first began designing the Romae T. Powell Juvenile Justice Center there was no question that we needed to include an outdoor space for a playground. Although everyone agreed that the needs of the children and families coming through the Court are unique and different, the one need – to*

*play- is shared by all children. Unfortunately, due to budgeting constraints, the space we identified for the playground has remained empty to date. . .As a long timer at the court and judge approaching retirement in the near future, I am committed to seeing that the court gets its playground prior to my departure. The children here need it and deserve it and we should make sure they get it.*

### **Passion for the Work**

Judge Jones had a passion for the work he did at Juvenile Court. He cared deeply about the children in his court and the parents struggling to care for them. He looked for their strengths, sought help for their weaknesses, and when he could not find help he reached out into the community to create a new resource. His service and commitment to the families and children of Fulton County will be greatly missed however together as a community we can ensure his work and passion is carried on through all of us.