

LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN

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The Lawyers' Association for Women Nominates Michele Johnson for the ATHENA Award

Nashville, TN - Michele Johnson is the 2006 Nashville ATHENA Award nominee of The Lawyers' Association for Women. Johnson is the managing attorney of the Tennessee Justice Center (TJC), a non-profit public interest law firm dedicated to serving the poor.

The ATHENA Award is considered Nashville's highest award of recognition for the achievements of professional women. More than thirty women's organizations throughout the community work together to organize the ATHENA Award, an annual event hosted each year since 1991. The award ceremony takes place at the foot of Athena's statue in The Parthenon, located in Nashville's Centennial Park.

"We are very proud of the tremendous service that Michele provides to our community," said Leesa Hinson, president, The Lawyers' Association for Women / Marion Griffin Chapter. "We selected Michele as our ATHENA Award nominee because of her inspiring and tireless advocacy efforts to ensure access to justice and life-saving medical treatment for children."

Johnson has dedicated her legal career to public service. In 1996, she and Gordon Bonnyman co-founded the Tennessee Justice Center, a non-profit law firm that is nationally recognized for the legal services provided to children with special health care needs. As managing attorney at the Tennessee Justice Center, she successfully lobbied to extend health care coverage to uninsured children in working families and participated in a landmark case establishing appeal rights for TennCare patients who have wrongfully been denied health care. As lead counsel, Johnson negotiated a class action settlement requiring comprehensive reform of health care services for 625,000 Tennessee children. She continues to represent scores of individual children and their families.

A native Nashvillian, Johnson is a graduate of Father Ryan High School, where she began her public service career as a volunteer at a pre-school for children with special health care needs. Upon graduation from the University of Tennessee College of Law, Johnson received a grant from the Southern Community Partners, a project of the Lynhurst Foundation, to work with Legal Services of Middle Tennessee to educate low income families about their children's legal rights and to help them obtain the medical care that the law and their doctors said they needed. In 1996, she left Legal Services to help found the Tennessee Justice Center.

Johnson was the winner of the 1999 Child Advocacy Award presented by the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Hemophilia and Bleeding Disorders Foundation. She is on the advisory board of Tennessee Voices for Children, where she chairs the policy committee and is president elect of the board. She is on the advisory boards of the Healthy Tomorrows Program, Family Voices of Tennessee, TennCare for Children and Early Child Health Outreach. She was a member of the Inaugural Class of the Tennessee Bar Association's Leadership Law Class. Johnson is married to Jeff Hill; they are parents of three young boys. She and her family are members of Christ the King Catholic Church.

Mayor Bill Purcell will present the 2006 ATHENA Award on Thursday, March 30, at The Parthenon. A reception beginning at 6:00 p.m. precedes the event.

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