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Ethics Commission honors middle school teacher

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust paid tribute to Miami Lakes Middle School teacher **Lisa Deyarza as the recipient of the 2016 Ethical Governance Day Award** during a ceremony this week (Tuesday, October 25th) that brought county and school officials to the Mock Courtroom that Ms. Deyarza envisioned and built using grants, donations and personal labor. In addition to opening the Mock Courtroom in 2014, Ms. Deyarza initiated a schoolwide annual Mock Trial Competition – the first for a middle school. The students play all roles in trials as they learn about the justice system.

Among the other many accomplishments in her efforts to help her students become better citizens, Ms. Deyarza created the Legal Studies Magnet Program at Miami Lakes Middle School a dozen years ago and opened the Biliterate Program in Social Studies. The 2006 “Teacher of the Year” for her school has led her students to win multiple awards in civic competitions including “We The People,” “Model United Nations” and “Project Citizen.” Her students were state winners six years in a row in Project Citizen and also earned a Superior National Rating.

Ethics Commission Executive Director Joseph Centorino presented a plaque to the educator, along with Miami-Dade District 13 County Commissioner Esteban Bovo, in front of other school officials, parents and students in her Legal Studies class. Referring to Deyarza as a “civic hero,” Mr. Centorino told the pre-teens, “It is with you, our future citizens, for which the success of our nation will depend, and what Ms. Deyarza does is so critical to your participation.” Miami-Dade Schools North District Superintendent Jose Bueno added that the students are “being well-prepared to be the future,” thanks to their teacher.

A political activist in her own right, Ms. Deyarza has volunteered on many campaigns, been active in several community service organizations and has been a member of the school’s Educational Excellence School Advisory Council for more than a decade. Prior to joining the faculty at Miami Lakes Middle, Ms. Deyarza taught fifth grade, where she served as department head, Science Fair coordinator and as sponsor for several clubs. She also taught in high school for ten years, where she led her students to similar awards, coached speech and debate and was named “Rookie Teacher of the Year” by her colleagues.

While accepting the award, Ms. Deyarza said she was gratified that “what I like to do... what I LOVE to do... is being recognized.

The award was part of the Ethics Commission’s 5th annual **Ethical Governance Day**, which was held last Thursday. More than 200 civic activists spoke in government and economics classes in dozens of Miami-Dade senior high schools to share with students the importance of civic activism and ethics in government.

The Ethics Commission was created in 1996 as an independent agency with advisory and quasi-judicial powers. It is composed of five members, serving staggered terms of four years each. Through a program of education, outreach and enforcement, the Commission seeks to empower the community and bolster public trust.

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Attached photo: Ethics Commission Executive Director Joseph Centorino (left) and Miami Lakes Middle School Principal Dr. Manuel Sanchez look on as Lisa Deyarza accepts the award of Ethical Governance Day Teacher of the Year.

