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### **Cheers and Tears for Ethical Governance Day Teacher**

Wiping tears from his eyes, Miami-Dade Civics Teacher Isaiah Thomas thanked his “family and his village” for support and love as he accepted the “Ethical Governance Day 2017 Teacher Award” from the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust. The ceremony, held Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> in the media center of Carrie P. Meek/Westview K-8 Center, drew school officials and dozens of adoring students. It was the fourth consecutive year that the Ethics Commission has honored a public school teacher for inspiring students to become active, engaged citizens.

Thomas was nominated based on his innovative approach to student civic involvement, including a class activity for Project Citizen called “Done with the Guns,” in response to the violence the 7<sup>th</sup> graders had experienced in their Northwest Miami-Dade neighborhoods. But it was obvious from the ceremony that the 28-year-old has accomplished so much more.

Tracey Crews, currently the principal of Dr. Toni Bilbao Preparatory Academy, hired Thomas in November 2013, when she was the top administrator at Meek/Westview. “At that time, only nine percent of the school’s students were considered proficient in civics,” she explained, “but in his first year, 62 percent of Mr. Thomas’s students were deemed proficient.” Jackie Viana, Miami-Dade School’s District Supervisor of Social Science, who also interviewed Thomas for job, noted that 72 percent of last year’s students passed the exam. “He has dedication and passion for law studies,” she said.

“This year, we’re going to get to 80 or 90 percent,” promised Thomas, himself a proud product of Miami-Dade Public Schools.

The event was a homecoming for Miami-Dade School Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, who once was the Assistant Principal at Meek/Westview. “Good things come from good people,” she said. “The ‘Done With the Guns’ program created a way for his kids to realize that don’t need to be a part of violence.”

According to his former Principal Crews, Thomas brought many programs to his classes in addition to “Project Citizen” for which the Guns program was created, including “We The People,” and “Code Master.” “He really put this school on the map,” Crews said.

His current principal, Marchel D. Woods, said that Thomas has “a gift on the inside that helps him connect with students.”

Ethics Commission Executive Director Joseph M. Centorino said the Ethical Governance Award is presented to a teacher who shows excellence in making sure students become involved and care about government. He read a quote from Children’s Rights Advocated Marian Wright Edelman that was on the plaque presented to Thomas: “Education is for

improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.” He added, “it’s obvious that has already occurred, and given Mr. Thomas’s young age (28), we expect even greater things to come.”

The sixth annual Ethical Governance Day was held Thursday, October 19. In addition to encouraging citizens and community groups, public agencies, professional associations and private businesses to hold activities and events that focus on how to become more active in their governments, the Ethics Commission has, for the past six years, placed nearly 200 civic leaders and activists in government classes throughout Miami-Dade senior high schools to talk with students about the importance of being informed and involved citizens.

*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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Left: School Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, joins Isaiah Thomas’ mother Frances Jones and Miami-Dade Ethics Commission Executive Director Joseph Centorino celebrating Thomas’ Ethical Governance Teacher Award.

Right: Civics Teacher Isaiah Thomas became emotional thanking his “family and village” and his mother’s sacrifices that helped get him where he is.



Right: Carrie P. Meek/ Westview K-8 Center Principal Marchel Woods celebrates Isaiah Thomas with many of his students.

