

NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE NETWORK

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LOUISIANA FATHER WINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION AS "GUTSY ADVOCATE FOR YOUTH"

Honored for His Tireless Work on Behalf of Kids in Trouble with the Law and Their Families

(Washington, DC) Ernest Johnson of [Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children](#) (FFLIC) was recognized recently for his tenacious work on behalf of young people in trouble with the law. Johnson, who is FFLIC's Statewide Juvenile Justice Reform Campaign and Policy Director, is the third recipient of the [Beth Arnovits Gutsy Advocate for Youth Award](#) (<http://bit.ly/OL4xBF>), which is given annually by the [National Juvenile Justice Network](#) to an individual who advocates for youth justice and juvenile justice reform and who embodies "the tenacity, vision, fearlessness and wisdom of Beth Arnovits."

"Ernest Johnson was a natural choice for the Gutsy Youth Advocate award," said Sarah Bryer, director of the National Juvenile Justice Network. "He started out advocating tenaciously for his own son, but quickly committed himself to helping as many other families and parents as he could. His determination and his desire to create a fair and just response to youth in trouble with the law by focusing on the appalling racial and ethnic disparities in the system are inspiring to us all."

The award was given July 24, 2014, at an annual gathering in Jackson, MS of juvenile justice advocates from across the country, recognizing Johnson as one of the leaders in juvenile justice reform in the country. He was honored for the breadth of his work, from educating individual families about the juvenile justice and school systems so they can effectively advocate for themselves and others, to participating in larger reform efforts such as helping to host the Advancement Project's School-to-Prison Pipeline Action Camp in New Orleans; his involvement

with national organizations Justice 4 Families and the Campaign for Youth Justice; serving on the advisory committee of the Equal Voice Campaign; co-chairing the New Orleans Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) committee associated with the Annie E. Casey Foundation; participating in the national Dignity in Schools campaign; and serving as a mentor at Each One Save One.

“Mr. Johnson has the unique ability to see both the forest and the trees,” said Gina Womack, executive director of [Families and Friends of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children](#), who nominated him for the award. “He’s able to advocate on a national level, while keeping in mind the mother he talked to three days ago who’s had to miss work several times because the judge keeps re-scheduling her child’s hearing. He uses his own story and experience to inspire others, create meaningful collaborations, and bring widespread attention to the injustices of the youth incarceration system nationwide.”

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The National Juvenile Justice Network is made up of 43 juvenile justice coalitions and organizations in 33 states that advocate for state and federal laws, policies and practices that are fair, equitable and developmentally appropriate for all children, youth and families involved in—or at risk of becoming involved in—the justice system. For more information, visit www.njjn.org.