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Access to Justice Award Winners Announced

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Aug. 27, 2014) - The [Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services](#) (TALS) will present the 2014 Access to Justice Awards on Wednesday, Sept. 10, at its annual [Equal Justice University](#). The awards honor legal professionals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in the cause of expanding access to civil legal services.

“More than 1 million Tennesseans’ incomes are 125 percent under the federal poverty guideline, so it’s critical for legal professionals to offer access to their services for those in need,” said Ann Pruitt, executive director of TALS. “The award honorees went above and beyond in 2014 as advocates for expanding civil legal services to low-income Tennesseans.”

This year’s award winners include:

George T. “Buck” Lewis: Receiving the inaugural Janice M. Holder Award, named for retiring Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Janice Holder. The Holder Award honors an individual who has advanced the quality of justice statewide by ensuring that the legal system is open and available to all. Lewis is a shareholder with Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.

“I am honored to be associated with an award named after Justice Holder,” said Lewis. “It is a privilege to work side by side so many great Tennesseans who care so deeply about our cause.”

Theresa-Vay Smith: Receiving the B. Riney Green Award, which recognizes advocates who coordinate statewide efforts to improve the quality of legal services for low-income Tennesseans. Smith is an attorney with the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee & the Cumberland.

Charlie McDaniel: Receiving the New Advocate of the Year Award, which honors advocates who have excelled within their first five years in public interest law. McDaniel is the pro bono project director for Legal Aid of East Tennessee's 10-county Southern Region.

The Equal Justice University conference is hosted by TALS and co-sponsored by the Tennessee Bar Association. The annual conference is a forum for Tennessee's legal services providers, pro bono attorneys and access-to-justice advocates, providing them with an opportunity to attend substantive law trainings and to share best practices.

Diane Nash, a longtime civil rights advocacy leader, will be the keynote speaker at this year's conference. The event will also feature art from the Tennessee State Museum's *We Shall Not Be Moved* exhibit. The full schedule of EJU 2014 events, including the award ceremonies, is available at <http://www.tals.org/EJUSchedule>

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Last updated on August 27, 2014.

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