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Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

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PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

July 31, 2012

Inaugural Juvenile Arbitration Volunteer Graduation

Solicitor W. Walt Wilkins delivered the commencement address Tuesday night, July 24th, to the first graduating class of community volunteers for the Greenville County Juvenile Arbitration Program. Juvenile Arbitration is a community-based diversion program run by the Thirteenth Circuit Solicitor's Office. The program has operated successfully in Pickens County for over twelve years and has now been expanded to Greenville County.

The graduation ceremony was the culmination of a twenty-one hour training course completed by seventeen volunteers over the past six weeks. The course covered a variety of topics including the concept of restorative justice, the juvenile court system and statutes that pertain to juvenile crime, exposure to area helping resources, creative sanctioning and much more. Volunteers will begin their first hearings during the month of August.

Juvenile Arbitration is designed for first-time, juvenile offenders charged with a non-violent crime. Offenders are diverted from the Juvenile Criminal Court System to arbitration hearings conducted in the juvenile's community by volunteer arbitrators who determine punishment and monitor the juvenile's progress throughout the program. A highlight to this process is the involvement of the victim and arresting officer as both are invited to participate in the hearing. When the offender completes the requirements the case will be

dismissed with the opportunity for expungement once the juvenile turns 18, assuming no additional charges have been earned.

The second arbitrator training class is planned for October. No prior experience in criminal law or juvenile justice is required. Eligible volunteers must: (1) be 21 years of age, (2) have a High School Diploma or GED, (3) pass a Criminal Background Check (Local, NCIC and DSS), and complete 21 hours of Arbitrator training. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Leisa Shea, Program Coordinator at (864) 467-5902 or by e-mail at lshea@greenvillecounty.org.