

## Teacher from Florida Receives American Civic Education Teacher Award

WASHINGTON

— Teacher Jackie Viana from Hialeah Gardens, Florida has been selected to receive the 2010 American Civic Education Teacher Award (ACETA). The award recognizes three exemplary teachers annually from throughout the United States for their work in preparing young people to become informed and engaged citizens.



*Teacher Jackie Viana*

The awards are given annually to elementary and secondary teachers of civics, government and related subjects who have demonstrated exceptional expertise, dynamism and creativity in motivating students to learn about the Constitution, Congress and public policy. Ms. Viana won in the middle school category.

ACETA is sponsored by the Center for Civic Education, the Center on Congress at Indiana University and the National Education Association.

Jackie Viana is a name well respected and recognized in the Florida civic and law related education community. Viana works closely with the Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. and participates in many of its numerous civic and law related education programs. She also serves as a teacher trainer for FLREA to share her passion for civics and her innovative

teaching methods with teachers throughout the state as well as in her native country of Peru, among other countries.

Annette Boyd Pitts, Executive Director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. wrote in support of Ms. Viana's nomination. "Jackie Viana brings civics, government, and law to life for her students. She is motivated by her students' enthusiasm and she feeds off their excitement in the classroom" Pitts noted. "Jackie cares about her students and puts them first in everything she does." Viana's students have been successful in solving a wide range of critical problems in their local community as well as in the State of Florida.



*Jackie Viana (left), Carmen Checa (middle), education consultant from Peru, and Annette Boyd Pitts, Executive Director FLREA (right).*

"She empowers her students to want to make a difference" remarked Rene Garcia, former state legislator and current candidate for the Florida Senate. "Her energy is contagious and there is just no way that you can say no when her students approach you for help." Rep Garcia assisted Viana's students with introducing several pieces of legislation in Florida including one bill which was signed into law by then Governor

Jeb Bush in her classroom. Last year, her students solved a traffic light problem which had resulted in several deaths. This session her students were successful in helping to pass legislation to regulate Florida's pill mills.



*Jackie Viana and former state legislator Rene Garcia with students at the Florida legislature.*

Viana utilizes a wide variety of teaching methods to bring her classroom to life. From simulated citizenship ceremonies to mock trials, her civics classes are more like laboratories for learning. She is a Project Citizen teacher and trainer. Project Citizen, a national initiative of the Center for Civic Education, serves as the vehicle for teaching applied civics in Ms. Viana's classroom. The Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. serves as state director for Project Citizen and provides free sets of books to middle and high school classrooms throughout Florida. The program is funded by Congress under the Education for Democracy Act. Viana encourages her students to get out and experience government" Pitts stated. "They will never forget the lessons they learn in this civics class."

Charles N. Quigley, Executive Director of the Center for Civic Education, praised Viana for her dedication to teaching young people the responsibilities of citizenship in

our democracy. "It is an honor to recognize teachers who are so enthusiastic about imparting the fundamental values and principles of our constitutional system of government," Quigley said.

Lee Hamilton, Director of the Center on Congress, lauded Viana for "helping students develop the knowledge and skills they need to work within the political system to make their communities and their nation better." In presenting the awards, Hamilton said, "We call public attention to the fact that many teachers across the nation are doing an excellent job molding the civic character of America's youth."

The ACETA winner will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in July to participate in an educational program that includes observing floor sessions and committee hearings in Congress, meeting members of Congress and other key officials, and visiting sites such as the National Archives and the U.S. Supreme Court.

In her self-portrait essay, Jackie Viana wrote, "By the time students leave high



*Jackie Viana with Peruvian teacher Ana Monica and her students at the Project Citizen Showcase in Peru.*

school, they should be equipped with the tools to become active citizens of their community and country. Living in a

democracy is a true blessing. I try to help my students appreciate that, not take it for granted. Nearly all my students are children of immigrants, or immigrants themselves, who came to this country in pursuit of freedom. I want to make young people aware that they have a patriotic duty to understand and sustain our democracy.”

Each year the ACETA program selects and showcases three teachers whose students represent the diversity of the American public and private school systems.

Applicants must be full-time classroom teachers of grades K–12. This is the first year that a Florida teacher has been recognized.

“Jackie Viana is motivated by her love for her students, community and ultimately this country,” Pitts stated. Viana will receive the award in June in Washington DC. For additional details, contact Annette Boyd Pitts, Executive Director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. at [abpflread@aol.com](mailto:abpflread@aol.com).