

**ABA PRESENTS ISIDORE STARR AWARD  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN LAW-RELATED EDUCATION**

**TO THOMAS G. WALKER JR. OF ALABAMA**

*Award presented at 2006 National LRE Leadership Conference in Phoenix, Jan. 28*

Thomas G. Walker Jr. of Montevallo, Alabama has received the American Bar Association's 2006 Isidore Starr Award. Established by the ABA in 1983, the biennial award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions in promoting excellence in K-12 law-related education (LRE). It is named in honor of Isidore Starr, 94, widely regarded as the "father of law-related education." Dr. Starr presented the award on January 28 at the ABA Division for Public Education's National LRE Leadership Conference, held in Phoenix, Arizona, January 26-28.

Mr. Walker is the founder and has been executive director of The Citizenship Trust at The American Village in Montevallo, Alabama since 1998. Located in a conclave of 13 colonial-style buildings on 113 acres south of Birmingham, the American Village is a unique education center dedicated to teaching citizenship through experiential learning programs grounded in constitutional history and law. Aided by expert historical interpreters in period costume, students actively participate in the American experience, whether debating and voting as delegates to the Constitutional Convention, talking to Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, or experiencing the power of the President's Oval Office.

"Tom Walker is a practical visionary with a keen sense of public purpose," says Mark Brandon, a Vanderbilt law professor who recounts Mr. Walker's essential role in founding the civic education center. "More than a decade ago, he imagined an educational community called 'The American Village.' As he envisioned it, the Village would be a place where students of school age could gather to acquire skills and learn basic lessons about constitutional democracy. He believed that constitutional democracy bestows many benefits, and among the most important is a civic life marked by liberty under law.... Tom did more than merely imagine the Village. Through ingenuity, determination, and enormous hard work, he made it a reality."

Built with a combination of public and private funds, today The American Village welcomes more than 45,000 visitors annually from throughout the country. Programs are coordinated with the Alabama State Department of Education. In 2004 Mr. Walker led efforts to persuade 9 Southeastern governors to form a compact to promote teaching of American history and civics, which would be administered by the Citizenship Trust at The American Village. U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) comments, "The American Village has experienced tremendous growth and great success since opening six years ago, and its message of law-related education is poised to reach a national audience through expanded campus and outreach efforts, due to Mr. Walker's clear vision, leadership, and guidance."

Before founding The American Village, Mr. Walker was Special Assistant to the President and Legislative Liaison at the University of Montevallo, Executive Vice President and CEO of the Alabama Association of Realtors, and City Manager and City Clerk of Northport, Alabama. He also was an adjunct faculty member at the University of Montevallo, teaching state and local government. Among his many education advocacy and public service activities, Mr. Walker served as president of the Montgomery County (Alabama) Council of PTAs, vice president of the Alabama Congress of PTAs, founding chair of the Alabama Higher Education Partnership, as a member of the Alabama Governor's Education Commission, and as secretary of the Joint Legislative Committee on Civic Education.

Mr. Walker is the author of *Government in Mississippi*, a textbook published by Steck-Vaughan, and executive producer of *Spirit of Liberty*, a dramatic educational DVD featuring Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" speech. He also has been the executive editor, writer, and contributor to numerous citizenship education, American history, and student mock election curricula.

"Part of our job is also to teach that conscious choices have been made to protect liberty within our constitutional order, in a system predicated on the revolutionary idea that the people are the source of political power," Mr. Walker emphasizes, in discussing his commitment to law-related education. "In turn our society is based on the rule of law. It is our duty to educate a new generation of citizens that they are co-owners of this constitutional enterprise, legal parties to the great American contract, who have not only rights, but also civic responsibilities."

Nominations for the Isidore Starr Award were judged by a seven-member committee appointed by the chair of the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Public Education. Past award recipients include Margaret E. Fisher, Annette Boyd Pitts, Marshall Croddy, Marilyn Cover, Mary Jane Turner, Arthur M. Ahalt, Gayle Mertz, Ellery "Rick" Miller, Eric Mondschein, Carolyn Pereira, Jennifer Bloom, Tom O'Donnell, Todd Clark, Lee Arbetman, Jack Hoar, Margaret Richards, Ira Eyster, and Linda Riekes.

For further information, contact the American Bar Association Division for Public Education, 312.988.5735, [abapubed@abanet.org](mailto:abapubed@abanet.org), or go online to [www.abanet.org/publiced/00starr.html](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/00starr.html).