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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 22, 2006

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LOCAL LAWYERS WIN STATEWIDE BRAIN BOWL

Two Assistant Public Defenders from the Ninth Circuit were crowned winners of Brain Bowl V, a competition of case law knowledge put on each year at the Winter Conference of the Florida Public Defender's Association.

In a spirited competition against teams comprised of Assistant Public Defenders from each of Florida's other judicial circuits, Leslie Thomas and Guillermo "Will" Corzo took the coveted award after correctly answering the most questions regarding Florida case law. The game show-style competition was held during the conference's "Trial With Style" seminar. Thomas, who supervises the county court division for Orange/Osceola Public Defender Bob Wesley, believes her weekly reading of Florida Supreme Court and appellate court opinions helped.

"I calendar time each week to read those opinions," she explained. "Just recently I was able to help one of our lawyers with a question because of an opinion I had read the week before. Keeping up with case law is critical to being an effective advocate."

Thomas graduated from the University of Florida College of Law and has been with the Public Defender's Office for five years. Corzo got his law degree at the New England School of Law and has been an Assistant Public Defender since May 2005.

Orange/Osceola Public Defender said news of the win did not surprise him.

"Both Leslie and Will are fantastic lawyers," said Wesley. "They know the law, they work hard for their clients and they are always reading to keep abreast of what's new."

Wesley says the award plaque will hang in the office. He believes Thomas and Corzo are already in training to defend their title at next year's Brain Bowl. The event is organized and moderated every year by Clearwater attorney Denis DeVlaming.

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