The Pennsylvania Bar Association Children’s Rights Committee has established an award to recognize the accomplishments of lawyers and judges who are advocates for children within the commonwealth. The recipient must have the highest degree of professional excellence and advanced the rights of children at law. All candidates have made unique contributions to and significant achievements on behalf of children.

The committee is pleased to announce the recipient of this year’s Child Advocate of the Year Award is Judge John C. Uhler. Originally elected to the bench in 1989, Judge Uhler is currently senior judge of the York County Court of Common Pleas. In his 20-year tenure as an active judge, he served as a juvenile court judge, in addition to many other duties. Judge Uhler has worked tirelessly on behalf of juveniles across the commonwealth.

A recognized leader in juvenile justice across the commonwealth, Judge Uhler initiated Pennsylvania's first juvenile Mental Health Court program, JUMP (Juvenile Probation United with Mental Health) in 1998. The JUMP program was recognized with the Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission’s Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Court Operated Program of the Year Award in 2005. Judge Uhler was appointed by Gov. Ed Rendell in 2008 to the State Council for Interstate Juvenile Supervision, which is charged with establishing recommendations and implementation of interstate rules relating to juveniles transferred between states. Judge Uhler served on the Interbranch Commission for Juvenile Justice, which was charged with reviewing juvenile court
practices, procedural rules and professional rules of conduct in the wake of extensive judicial corruption in Luzerne County.

Described as a “true judicial role model in the area of juvenile law,” Judge Uhler served as president of the Juvenile Judges’ Section from 2001-2003 and as consultant to the Pennsylvania Juvenile Delinquency Bench Book, a treatise that judges across the state find invaluable when presiding over juvenile matters. He has been passionate about addressing the issue of truancy in York County. Judge Uhler is chairman and founder of York County's Truancy Prevention Initiative, a model youth truancy reduction program initiated for York, including its 16 separate school districts and numerous charter schools. York’s Truancy Initiative has become a model for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Judge Uhler’s passion for and investment in reducing truancy began in 1995. For more than 14 years, he inspired a growing broad-based community initiative without financial resources into an organization that has realistic expectancies of sustainability.

Judge Uhler has served as a panelist and lecturer on subjects including “Professionalism in the Aftermath of Luzerne County,” “Juvenile Justice,” “Juvenile Court Judge’s Expectations of Juvenile Probation,” “Children’s Rights,” “The Role of a Juvenile Court Judge” and “Transfer and Certification of Juvenile Cases.” He also has participated with numerous formal and ad-hoc committees, addressing Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Court Rules, the Code of Judicial Conduct and proposed changes to legislation in the commonwealth that affect children.

Judge Uhler was described by one nominator as “a man who demonstrates judicial leadership of the highest integrity.” Despite his retirement, he continues to work passionately on behalf of youths within our commonwealth. We are pleased to select Judge Uhler as this year’s recipient of the Children’s Rights Committee Child Advocate of the Year Award!