

2007 MLK Spirit Award Recipient

Rory Ellinger

Rory Ellinger is a true disciple of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He has committed his life to breaking down the barriers caused by the inequities of social and racial injustice. His passion for fairness extends through the work he has done for education, the community and professionally as an attorney.

During the 1960s, Ellinger was involved with the Civil Rights Movement. He participated in demonstrations and, at one time, served as a personal bodyguard for Dr. King. In later years, he and his wife Linda Locke successfully helped elect Hannibal, Missouri's first African American city council member.

Ellinger is a former member of the School District of University City Board of Education, serving as a director from 1991 to 2003. During his 12 year tenure, he led the Board as its president for three terms, co-founded the Mayor-School Board Committee for city and school district cooperation, supported the implementation of an elementary school Spanish language curriculum, served actively on the District's attract and retain committee and was influential in leading the effort to rename Daniel Boone Elementary School to Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School in honor of the late US Congresswoman from Texas. Additionally Ellinger served on the Dr. Martin Luther King Celebration committee and initiated the MLK Spirit Award.

Ellinger's commitment to civil rights is exhibited professionally through his work as an attorney and as a published author. He has helped families buy homes in the northern section of University City by supporting their legal struggles against indifferent or mean-spirited landlords, bill collectors and government agencies. As an author, he has written a book on "Poverty in Missouri" as well as various legal handbooks for attorneys.

Ellinger holds B.A., M.A., and J.D. degrees from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is a member of the Missouri Bar Association and serves on the boards of a number of community groups and associations including the University City Education Foundation, which he helped to found, and the Missouri Association for Social Welfare.

Through his civil rights work, Ellinger has developed relationships with various organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, City Council, Rotary Club, Head Start, Community Action Agencies and the local NAACP. He has earned the admiration and support of judges as well as legal colleagues, transformed potential adversaries into advocates by persuading them that ALL people are entitled to respect, that their concerns should be heard and addressed and that EVERYONE deserves their day in court.