



Public defenders honored

William Dillon spent 27 years of a life sentence in Florida prison before being freed because of DNA evidence. He told the staff of the Office of Fourth Circuit Public Defender Matt Shirk that it was relentless "digging" and uncompromised passion for justice by his attorney that eventually cleared him of the conviction for a murder he did not commit.

The Jan. 29 appearance by Dillon was part of the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Fourth Circuit Public Defender's Office. Most of the staff of nearly 150 people, including attorneys, secretaries, investigators and paralegals from the Duval, Clay and Nassau county offices, was present.



"I just wanted to have him here to explain to the lawyers and other staff to keep their mission, to keep true to the mission and be inspired by it," said Shirk. "His incredible presentation really illustrates why we do what we do as attorneys in the Public Defender's Office."

Other business conducted at the annual meeting included an awards ceremony. Recipients of the various distinctions included the Nassau County Employee of the Year, Assistant Public Defender Tom Townsend, lauded for his work in 2009 for the Public Defender's Office.