

*Neil J. Houston, Jr.*

*Scholar – Athlete – Justice Reformer – Philanthropist*

In 1981, Justice Assistance initiated an annual award to honor individuals who have demonstrated dedication, service, and citizen contributions to the justice profession and the public interest. Since 1988, Justice Assistance has been proud to name the award after Neil J. Houston, Jr. as a memorial to his outstanding achievements in the justice and philanthropic fields.

Mr. Houston, a native of Cranston, attended LaSalle Academy and was a 1967 Cum Laude graduate of Harvard College, where he starred in baseball, cross country and indoor track, and was the college's nominee to become a Rhodes Scholar. Upon graduation, and while attending graduate school at Brown University, he played two years of professional baseball in the Detroit Tiger organization. From the early 1970's Mr. Houston served as director of management and finance for the Massachusetts Half-Way Houses, Inc., Boston, until he became the executive director of the Justice Resources Institute in 1976. In 1978, he was appointed executive director of the Crime and Justice Foundation.

Chairman of the Emergency Loan Fund, a committee chairman for the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's Gender Bias Commission, and the lay member of the Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers, Mr. Houston was also president and founder of the Boston Community Offices, an organization to provide permanent rental space in downtown Boston for nonprofit organizations. In 1987, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts appointed him to the Governor's Commission on the Legal Needs of Children. He also served on the Governor's Special Commission on Correction Alternatives.

Mr. Houston is credited with the design and implementation of the nation's first mediation program, first day reporting center, and first facility to house incarcerated, pregnant inmates. Today there is the Neil J. Houston, Jr. House in Boston for incarcerated pregnant inmates, the Neil J. Houston, Jr. Community Corrections Act Fund line item within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts budget, and endowed scholarships in his name at both LaSalle Academy and Harvard.

At the time of his death in November 1987, Mr. Houston was the executive director and president of the Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation, which funds reforms of the criminal justice system, and president of the Frederick E. Weber Charities Corp., a nonprofit organization that helps individuals in need. The special sitting of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court as a memorial to Mr. Houston was the first of its kind for someone other than a member of the court.