

Judge August Bonavita

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Spend some time with newly appointed county court judge August Bonavita, and you will come away with a sense that this man is well suited to the task of serving on the bench. Judge Bonavita is presently serving in the criminal division of county court, where he is able to immediately apply his knowledge and experience with criminal law. He has experience on the defense side, having served as an Assistant Public Defender in Tampa, as well as on the side of the prosecution, having served in the Office of the Attorney General's appellate section, here in Palm Beach County, where he wrote and argued criminal appeals for many years. Judge Bonavita draws upon his experience on both sides of a criminal case, and sees his job as "riding a center line" and considering "each case on its own merits." One challenge for a new judge, he concedes, is "learning to take off your lawyer's hat and just listen." But the judge is committed to his changed role and enjoys the new challenges. In addition to his criminal law experience, Judge Bonavita also has private practice experience, has taught as an adjunct professor of law and still currently teaches at Palm Beach Community College, and served as a judicial law clerk following law school.

Judge Bonavita decided to attend law school after being unfulfilled in the work of finance, having worked for AT&T Bell Labs for several years after college. Despite the professional track job, and his bachelor's degree in finance (Seton Hall, 1985), Judge Bonavita wanted to do something where he could work with people and make an impact. Returning to his alma mater, Judge Bonavita earned high marks, participated in moot court, family law clinic program, and won an award for his appellate advocacy brief. He earned his juris doctorate in 1992.

Judge Bonavita was born August Anthony Bonavita on November 5, 1963. He was the youngest child of four (two sisters and a brother) second generation Italian Americans. Although he grew up in New Jersey, his family often traveled to Florida, so when he had the chance to take the Florida bar examination after law school, in addition to New Jersey, he eagerly took the opportunity, thinking that it might be nice to go South someday. He also relished the idea of easier entry and exits from buildings, along with being able to simply go down the sidewalk any time of year. You may not know, but Judge Bonavita requires the use of a wheel chair for mobility. However, he seems to take this in stride, having dealt with physical impairment from the age of eight, when a play time accident resulted in his electrocution, and later amputation, of both legs and his right arm. While this may have limited his physical options, it likewise provided him a greater dependence on his mental skills, which of course, have developed into a keen legal mind. Despite his physical limits, his

personal life has flourished, as he is supported by his lovely wife, Laura, and ten year old daughter, Julia. They are very proud of him, not for becoming a judge, although that is nice too, but for simply being the great guy that he is. Judge Bonavita cherishes his family time, and his role as a father. They love to travel, as they still have family up North, and he likes to unwind at home by playing piano, which his daughter is also starting to learn. If you ask him about his family, his face will light up and you will be greeted with a broad smile. No, Judge Bonavita is not disabled, he is just challenged. But he has met his challenges and is enjoying life. Judge Bonavita is clearly an asset to Palm Beach County.

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