



# Administrative Office of the Courts

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## *Court Announces Employee and Volunteer Service Awards for 2013-- Saco Woman Named Court Employee of the Year.*

For Immediate Release—Portland, Maine. Chief Justice Leigh I. Saufley, of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, today announced the recipients of the Maine Judicial Branch performance awards for 2013.

Prior to announcing the awards, the Chief Justice observed, “One of my favorite tasks is to read all the nominations submitted for these awards. While we can only publically recognize a handful of Judicial Branch employees for their public service, the ones we recognize also represent their peers, their fellow nominees and employees. These are the people who understand that serving the public is a privilege. The individuals that we recognized today, as well as their colleagues who were nominated, consistently go beyond their job descriptions and reasonable job expectations and inspire all of us to achieve more for the public good.”

Chief Justice Saufley announced that *Gail Merritt of Saco* is the *Outstanding Judicial Employee of the Year*. This award is conferred upon that person who best exemplifies the qualities of competence in providing court services, commitment to public service, respect, courtesy to fellow employees and members of the public, and a willingness to learn and grow. The Chief Justice observed that, “In 2009, Gail Merritt became the Supervisor of the Family Division. In typical fashion, Gail plunged right in, and today, the Family Division runs far more efficiently due to her management skills. Gail oversees a staff of 7, and manages the scheduling, staffing, and other operational needs to support thousands of family matter cases each and every year.”

Chief Justice Saufley announced that the recipient of the 2013 “*Judicial Branch Career Performance Award*” is *Judge John David Kennedy*, who sits in the West Bath District Court. The award is given to that person who consistently contributes above and beyond expected job responsibilities to further the Judicial Branch mission. Judge Kennedy has

served as a judge of the District Court since 2002, and for over a decade prior to his appointment by the Governor as a judge, he was an employee of the Judicial Branch. Judge Kennedy will be retiring from the judiciary in early 2013. In recognizing Judge Kennedy the Chief Justice said, “Judge Kennedy exemplifies what it means to be a good judge, dedicated to the rule of law. When we train new judges, David is one of the people that we insist that new judges observe and learn from.”

The *Special Service Award* was given this year to the manager and staff of the Service Center. The Chief Justice said, “The Service Center, located in Lewiston, was created by the Court as a pilot project for Androscoggin County in 2012 to centralize telephone service and inquiries, and relieve the clerks in those courts from the near constant interruption from phone calls. These phone calls are also critically important to providing good public service to those who use the courts, and seek information by telephone. The Service Center has proved to be a great success, efficiently resolving 70% of the calls that previously required the attention of a clerk in a courthouse. The Service Center has now expanded to serve more courts, and continues to improve public service to Maine people. Their data gathering has assisted in identifying the legal areas of greatest confusion or concern, and has allowed us to address information gaps and develop information that better addresses public needs. The employees honored were: *John Smith, Kim Mitchell, Samantha Turcotte, Sarah Pelletier, Marie Woodrum, Suzanne Chamberlain, Sue-Ellen DeGroot, Doreen Gummo, and Kathleen Clavette.*

The *Roy Rice Award* is given to that person, group, or organization that has made an outstanding contribution to the safety and well being of the employees of the Judicial Branch and people who participate in court activities. Chief Justice Saufley announced that this year’s winner is Mark Tibbetts, of Steep Falls, a Sergeant who is based out of the Lewiston District Court, but is responsible for court security in several courts in Western Maine. Chief Justice Saufley said, “Mark has been called upon to address several significant court security issues in the region in the past year, and has worked diligently to make those courts a safer place for Maine citizens and the employees who work in the courts.”

Michaela Richardson, of Sangerville was awarded the Judicial Branch Volunteer of the Year Award. Michaela is a volunteer in the Dover Foxcroft District and the Piscataquis County Superior Courts. In recognizing Melissa, the Chief Justice observed, “Although a full time college student, Michaela has arranged her schedule to permit her to work two very full days a week in the Dover-Foxcroft Courthouse! She is an efficient and smart young woman, who has become an indispensable part of the organization of that court. We are so grateful for her contribution.”

