

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

**March 15, 2017**

### **2016 Judicial Branch Employee of the Year** **Gayle Lafferty**

Gayle P. Lafferty, from the Supreme Court, has been named as the Judicial Branch Employee of Year for 2016.

In her role as Chief Staff Attorney for the Supreme Court, Gayle is described by her superiors and co-workers as good-natured and an invaluable resource. This has been particularly true during this past year when she assisted on a number of projects in addition to her usual duties, including overseeing the creation of a Supreme Court intranet site. Thanks to Gayle's outstanding efforts, the Supreme Court now has a single, shared repository for forms, guidelines, calendars, and other useful information that is now easily accessible to Justices and staff, thus improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Court.

"Gayle Lafferty has been critical to the success of the Delaware Supreme Court and its Judiciary more generally for a generation. She is one of the finest attorneys in Delaware, has tremendous expertise in criminal law, professional ethics, and many other areas of law. We all look to her regularly for wise counsel. It is fitting that the public know what so many of us in the Judiciary have long recognized: which is that Gayle Lafferty is a model attorney and public servant," said Chief Justice Leo E. Strine, Jr.

"Gayle was one of my first law clerks. Her work was exemplary. I enthusiastically supported her interest in becoming our Chief Staff Attorney. One of the most memorable aspects of my judicial career has been working with Gayle on a daily basis. I'm happy she has been recognized as the Judicial Branch Employee of the Year because she is the perfect role model for others to follow," said Justice Randy J. Holland.

Gayle has worked for the Supreme Court for more than 20 years and supervises a staff of attorneys who assist the Court in its work. Gayle prepares drafts, makes scheduling recommendations, and responds to numerous inquiries from within and outside the Court. Gayle also serves as counsel to the Chief Justice, assisting him with matters of policy arising from the Chief Justice's role as head of the Supreme Court and other courts of this State.

In addition to these duties, Gayle has also assisted other courts in some of their projects during this past year. Some examples include: assisting the Superior Court in making changes to postconviction procedures and assisting the Criminal Justice Council of the Judiciary in preparing its Report on Delaware's Problem Solving Courts.

"In the spring of 2014, Gayle worked with the Superior Court to adopt some of the most important changes to that Court's postconviction procedures in decades. And her work came at a critical juncture when our Supreme and Superior Courts were facing uncertainty over the effects

that certain federal rulings would have on Delaware practice, the ever-increasing resource demand of complex postconviction filings, and the upswing in abusive litigation practices of too many postconviction litigants. Gayle's skill in drafting was invaluable in assisting the Courts to craft procedural rules that now help to meet these critical day-to-day challenges," said Superior Court Judge Paul R. Wallace.

"It is not an understatement to say that without Gayle's help and guidance, the Report on Delaware's Problem Solving Courts could not have been produced. She was the initial drafter of the report and was instrumental in helping obtain assistance from American University. Not only was her work product outstanding, the work was always performed in a professional and pleasant manner. She truly deserves to be recognized as the Judiciary's Employee of the Year," said Judge William C. Carpenter, Jr.

We congratulate Gayle on receiving this well-deserved honor.

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Other employees nominated for this award, who will be honored as the Employee of the Year for their respective courts, were:

**Carla Robinson, Court Security Officer I, Family Court.** In April 2016, while conducting an Ex Parte PFA Hearing with a commissioner, CSO Carla Robinson observed that a petitioner appeared to have recent injuries to her face and neck. Due to the configuration of the courtroom and the distance between the commissioner and the petitioner, the commissioner was unable to observe the injuries. CSO Robinson's observations of the injuries led to the court reconvening on the record, describing the injuries and ensuring that the Domestic Violence Advocacy Program took photographs of the injuries. Without the CSO Robinson's observations and engagement, the petitioner may not have received proper care and necessary attention.

**Davina Mifflin, Senior Accountant, Superior Court.** Davina has taken care of the Accounting Unit with the talent, fierceness, tenacity and organization needed by a bookkeeper/accountant. Currently, Superior Court is moving the criminal accounting system to CJIS. As with any conversion, this requires a lot of time for cleanup and for reports to be run to check on cases. Davina has had to immerse herself into this project to ensure that the conversion contains correct and clean data. This is a job that requires concentration and vigilance to make certain that all data is correct prior to the conversion. With immersion into this innovative project, as well as fulfilling her normal day-to-day duties, the result will be a substantial improvement in the quality and efficiency in the Court's criminal accounting system.

**Carol Lemieux, Judicial Operations Manager, Court of Common Pleas.** Carol frequently surpasses the expectations and duties encompassed in her job responsibilities as a Judicial Operations Manager for the Court of Common Pleas, Kent County. She utilizes her extensive education to identify areas for improvement within the court's operations and to administer solutions. Carol analyzed Kent County operations and made operational changes to increase office efficiency and improve service delivery to the public. Her reorganizational concepts are currently being implemented – and she is participating in the planning – in restructuring the New

Castle County Clerks' Office. Carol also assisted our Court Administration in the production of an updated statewide operation manual and is serving as project lead in examining processes across counties and making recommendations for standardization. Additionally, she has worked diligently to create a sentencing form that was well received by the Department of Correction. Carol's leadership and willingness to assist in process improvement projects – that increase the Court's efficiency, productivity, and improve service delivery to the public – are invaluable to the State.

**Jennifer Figueira, Coordinator of Court Interpreters Program, Administrative Office of the Courts.** As Coordinator for the Court Interpreters Program Jennifer has faced numerous challenges since her start over two years ago. The program itself has been running at a deficit since 2014 with a soaring demand for services. Jennifer was called upon to do more with less. This past year was particularly difficult for the program which saw an unexpected double-digit increase in demand resulting in a dramatic increased deficit, which led to frustration amongst the interpreters. Jennifer used her immense creativity and logical problem solving to create a win-win solution by devising a new contractual arrangement which provides interpreters on a regular basis to the courts at a lower cost. This pilot program will be evaluated at the end of this next fiscal year. The hope is that this new arrangement might lead to a more efficient and effective way of doing business. Throughout it all, Jennifer continuously displayed great aplomb, grace and leadership in a way that was beneficial to all constituents.

**Court 11 Clerks, Justice of the Peace Court (Robin Bundy, Crystal Colclough, Crystal Thomas, Laurie Gravell, Janay Barron, Carly Juno, Charene Harris, Clare Messick, Andrea Flores, and Debbie Hall).** The Court 11 Clerks have worked tirelessly despite staffing challenges. They have all found themselves working 16 hours within a 24 hour period; training new clerks, only to have them depart within a couple of months; working solo on outtake on a PPP day; and working with new judges. While juggling the above, they have helped to bring the new and veteran clerks together, creating a team that supports one another in all circumstances. And through it all they have continued to serve the public pleasantly and efficiently.