

Nebraska Judicial Branch News

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Chief Justice Heavican Presents Awards to Judges Gerrard and Gendler

Chief Justice Mike Heavican acknowledged his predecessor and founder of the judicial awards dinner, Judge John Hendry and Hendry's wife Deb, as he opened the eighth annual awards program on the evening of November 2, 2006, at the Omaha Press Club.

Heavican stated that the two awards, Distinguished Judge for Service to Community and Distinguished Judge for Improvement of the Judicial System, were "established to publicly recognize

members of the judiciary for meritorious projects and exemplary accomplishments that enhance the vision of justice within our communities." He expressed his pleasure in continuing the awards dinner tradition and acknowledged the members of the awards selection committee who have served since 1999: Judge Jan Gradwohl, Judge Bill Blue, and Judge Bill Rist, who was in attendance at the dinner with his wife. The Chief Justice also

introduced new members of the judiciary who attended the dinner that evening.

Distinguished Judge for Service to Community

First to be honored was Judge Larry Gendler of the Separate Juvenile Court in Sarpy County. Heavican cited Gendler's extensive community involvement and leadership ability in presenting the



Chief Justice Heavican (right) presents Judge Gendler with the Distinguished Judge Award during 2006 ceremony.

award:

- Board member, PRIDE Omaha, Inc.
- Alegent Health Midland Community Hospital Advisory Board
- Governor's Task Force on Diversion, Detention, and Probation Services
- Sarpy County S.A.F.E. Policy
- Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice



Honorable
Lawrence D.
Gendler, Judge of
the Separate
Juvenile Court in
Sarpy County

“... for a judge who has distinguished himself or herself through performance of service to the community on a volunteer or professional level”

- Nebraska Committee for Children and Youth

In noting Gendler’s recent appointment as Chair of the Nebraska Supreme Court’s “Through the Eyes of the Child” Initiative, Heavican said that Gendler “will again graciously extend himself to the community. His enthusiastic leadership will, no doubt, benefit children across the entire state.”

Heavican then called attention to Gendler’s dedication to his family-- his wife and two young sons. He also cited Gendler’s volunteer efforts in the Omaha area at the Stephen Center, a substance abuse halfway house, and in “Rebuilding Together,” a program that annually repairs homes for the elderly.

Heavican then focused Gendler’s trustworthiness and sense of humor as well as the respect he

demonstrates for others, regardless of their age or social standing. In concluding, he stated that Gendler’s “brilliant problem-solving ability and a natural instinct to recognize the potential of others has greatly benefited the youth of Sarpy County.”

In reflecting on the award bestowed by his colleagues, Gendler says that he is reminded of this story.

An Israeli doctor was in Bosnia performing volunteer medical duties when he was stopped by the BBC and asked to give an interview. He refused and explained to the reporter that what he was doing was mitzvot (which is good deeds in Hebrew) and tikkun olam (which is repair the world in Hebrew.) If he were to give an interview it would no longer be mitzvot. The principles of mitzvot and

Distinguished Judge - Improvement of Judicial System

- 1999: **Hon. Robert O. Hippe**, Scotts Bluff County District Judge, for serving as editor of the Nebraska Bench Book, for developing a divorce education project for parents, and for his volunteer work.
- 2000: **Hon. F. A. Gossett**, Dodge County District Judge, for his outline on handling evidence beginning in 1981. The outline eventually grew into the Nebraska Evidence Handbook and is published by Nebraska Continuing Legal Education for distribution to lawyers and judges across the state.
- 2001: **Hon. Alan L. Brodbeck**, Holt County Judge, for his long service as chairman of the county judges’ education committee and other education efforts. He also developed a Web site for the Nebraska County Judges Association in 1998. The site is divided into two parts, a public portion that seeks to educate citizens about the workings of the court and a private side dedicated to information for fellow judges.
- 2002: **Hon. Karen B. Flowers**, Lancaster County District Judge, for her leadership and supervision of the first drug court in Lancaster County. Other endeavors include teaching the Domestic Relations section of the new judge orientation and other educational participation. She also served as president of the Lincoln chapter of the American Inns of Court, past president of the Lincoln Bar Association and past chair of the Nebraska Bar Association’s House of Delegates.
- 2003: **Hon. John P. Icenogle**, Buffalo County District Judge, improved the efficiency of the judiciary through his chairmanship of the district judges Education Committee for the last 10 years. He has spoken at many, if not most, of the judicial education meetings on various topics. Additional committee service including: Past President, NE County Judges Association; Past President, NE Juvenile Justice Association; Prior Member, NE Judicial Council; Prior Member, Supreme Court Probation Advisory Committee.
- 2004: **Hon. Steven B. Timm**, Gage County Judge, long-time teacher at judicial and bar conferences as well as the “Young Lawyers” training at UNL. Cited for his willingness to help other courts when coverage or help is needed. General dedication to assist in whatever way he can – considered to be an ‘all around player’ for the team.
- 2005: **Hon. Bernard J. McGinn**, Lancaster County District Judge, for his exemplary temperament, reputation for common sense, patience, tact and understanding during his judicial tenure of 25 years. Also, his for teaching, leadership and mentoring of fellow judges.

tikkun olam teach that you 'Do for others, not for the publicity, but for the privilege.'

"So in that regard, I am somewhat embarrassed that others know of my work as my intent is not to receive publicity or accolades. Those of us in this profession are truly fortunate and we are reminded of that fact every day. I do appreciate the honor."

Distinguished Judge for Improvement of the Judicial System

Justice John Gerrard, Nebraska Supreme Court, was selected by his fellow judges to receive the Distinguished Judge for Improvement of the Judicial System

Award. In recognizing Gerrard, Heavican stated, "The judge was nominated for his unfaltering commitment to court reforms which are designed to better serve Nebraska's minority and immigrant communities." Heavican continued, "In both his role as chair of the Minority Justice Implementation Committee and as chair of the Interpreter Advisory Council, Justice Gerrard has led numerous initiatives promoting racial and ethnic fairness in the courts and diversity in the legal profession."

Some of the highlights of Gerrard's career on the Supreme Court include:

- Testifying at legislative hearings to obtain access to data needed to assure racial and ethnic fairness in the courts



Honorable John Gerrard, Justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court, District 3

Distinguished Judge - Service to the Community

- 1999: **Hon. James M. Murphy, Retired**, Douglas County District Court, for his effort to establish the Douglas County Drug Court, which began in April 1997 and was the first of its kind in Nebraska.
- 2000: **Hon. Donald E. Rowlands**, Lincoln County District Judge, for his work with Latino and Hispanic communities in his district. He helps with a local Hispanic citizenship project, speaking to classes about the judicial branch of the American system of government and developing a booklet on the court system for distribution to citizenship students.
- 2001: **Hon. Douglas F. Johnson**, Douglas County Separate Juvenile Court Judge, for maintaining a rigorous schedule as a volunteer and leader within his community. As a judge, his efforts include serving on the Board of Trustees of the NCJFCJ, involved in the Permanency Planning for Children Project; and speaker for the Foster Care Review Board and The Troubled Children and Youth Conferences; and for starting a series of free, "brown bag" educational lectures at the Douglas County Juvenile Court.
- 2002: **Hon. William B. Cassel**, Brown County District Judge, and **Hon. Robert R. Steinke**, Platte County District Judge, for their commitment as regional coordinators for the Nebraska High School Mock Trial Project for many years. Additionally, Judge Cassel set up a Web site for his 8th Judicial District and provides a spreadsheet program via the Internet for use by judges and lawyers in calculating child support payments.
- 2003: **Hon. Wadie Thomas**, Douglas County Separate Juvenile Court Judge, for chairmanship of National Adoption Day in Omaha; chairmanship of Graduated Sanctions in Omaha (one of ten sites in the US); trustee of NCJFCJ; trainer of Disproportionate Confinement of Minorities & Domestic Violence w/NCJFC; prior service on Judicial Ethics Committee; member of Judicial Qualifications Commission.
- 2004: **Hon. Linda S. Porter**, Lancaster County Separate Juvenile Court Judge for her promotion and work on the TPAL program with the Bar Foundation. Teaches, trains, and volunteers with educators and teens to explain rights and responsibilities of teen parents.
- 2005: **Hon. Richard D. Sievers**, Court of Appeal Judge, and **Hon. Teresa K. Luther**, Hall County District Judge, for their partnership in bringing the needs of Pro Se Litigants to the attention of the bench and bar through their committee work and for Pro Se projects benefiting both the public and the court system.

"... given to a judge who has distinguished himself or herself through contributions to the improvement of the judicial system; service as a trial judge; or promotion of judicial efficiency."



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- Educating the legal profession on the importance and role of language interpreters
 - Initiating statewide public hearings regarding racial bias and discrimination in the justice system
 - Recommending and implementing improvements within the court system
 - Convening town hall meetings seeking public feedback on the court's plan of action
 - Establishing Nebraska's Legal Diversity Web site
 - Launching "Year of the Juror" in 2006.
- Of the bestowing of the

Court's award, Gerrard comments, "There is no greater honor than to be recognized and appreciated by your peers...and I mean that." He was quick to credit the work of others by adding, "In all sincerity, the blood, sweat and tears of all members of the Minority and Justice Committee is reflective of who should really receive such an award." Adjourning the Eighth Annual Judicial Awards Dinner, Heavican expressed thanks to Gerrard, Gendler and former Chief Justice John Hendry. He concluded, "These honorees exemplify outstanding service, worthy of our recognition on more than this one night."

Former Chief Justice Hendry Honored with Collegiality Award

"Tonight we honor those who have served all of us here through their volunteerism, their perseverance, and the fine examples that they have set for us."

...Chief Justice Mike Heavican

Representing the justices who served with Hendry during his term as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice John Wright presented Hendry with the Court's Collegiality Award with this inscription:

With sincere appreciation and best wishes to The Honorable John V. Hendry, Conferred by the undersigned members of the Nebraska Supreme Court in grateful recognition of his service as our Chief Justice from October 1, 1998 to October 2, 2006.

The award was signed by the

Supreme Court Justices who were members of the 'Hendry' court: John Wright, William Connolly, John Gerrard, Kenneth Stephan, Michael McCormack, and Lindsey Miller-Lerman.



Justice Wright (right) presents former Chief Justice John Hendry with collegiality award.