

NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM



2013 LAW DAY AWARDS  
PRESENTATION

—  
**HON. JONATHAN LIPPMAN**  
*Chief Judge*

**HON. A. GAIL PRUDENTI**  
*Chief Administrative Judge*

**HON. LAWRENCE K. MARKS**  
*First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge*

—  
NEW YORK STATE COURT OF APPEALS  
ALBANY, NEW YORK

MAY 1, 2013



JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

DISTINGUISHED JURIST AWARD

HON. MARYBETH RICHROATH

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

HON. THOMAS E. MERCURE



MERIT PERFORMANCE AWARDS

SUPERIOR WORK PERFORMANCE

TRACY CATAPANO-FOX, ESQ.

CECILIA BEREAN

COMMUNITY SERVICE  
AND HUMANITARIAN PURSUITS

LUCILE MALLARD

HEROISM

SGT. EDWARD CASSIDY





## Presentation of Awards

### **HON. A. GAIL PRUDENTI**

*Chief Administrative Judge of the Courts*

**I**N KEEPING WITH AN ANNUAL COURT OF APPEALS TRADITION, we gather this Law Day, joining thousands of Americans in celebration of our nation's prized rule of law. This year's theme – "Realizing the Dream: Equality for All" – gives us pause to reflect on the strides made toward eliminating all forms of discrimination, the role of our courts in protecting fairness, and the challenges we must overcome in turning this national ideal into reality.

Today we also pay tribute to six individuals for their outstanding contributions to the Judiciary and their communities. I am so pleased to present this year's Judicial Excellence Awards to two esteemed members of the New York State bench – one a recipient of the Distinguished Jurist Award, and the other to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award. Later in the program, First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks will present the court system's Merit Performance Awards to four exemplary non-judicial employees.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to all our judges and non-judicial employees for their hard work and perseverance, especially in these tough fiscal times, and to thank Chief Judge Lippman, the Associate Judges of the Court of Appeals, the Presiding Justices, New York State Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman and President of the New York State Bar Association Seymour W. James, Jr. for their support of this year's Law Day awards presentation.

DISTINGUISHED JURIST AWARD

HON. MARYBETH RICHROATH

**Q**UEENS COUNTY FAMILY COURT JUDGE MARYBETH RICHROATH is the ultimate multitasker. In addition to the day-to-day challenges that come with managing a busy Family Court calendar, Judge Richroath leads a variety of committees working to enhance the processing of child-protective and other critical Family Court matters. Among her “extracurricular” duties, she chairs a citywide advisory committee on child-permanency planning. Despite the committee’s large size, Judge Richroath was able to address the collective concerns and harness the many talents of this cross-disciplinary group, resulting in the issuance of several insightful reports and the production of a resource guide to aid Family Court judges in their oversight of these difficult, highly complex matters, among other tangible achievements.

Judge Richroath’s leadership, keen judgment and tireless determination have also been assets to a citywide advisory group established by New York City Family Court Administrative Judge Edwina Richardson-Mendelson to expand best practices, and a subcommittee that, via more effective collection and evaluation of case data, is looking to implement systemic child-welfare reforms.

Since her appointment to the New York City Family Court bench in 2001, Judge Richroath has generously devoted her time and efforts to numerous initiatives supporting the best interests of children and families served by the Court, at the same time keeping up with a heavy Family Court caseload. It is a privilege to honor her with the 2013 Distinguished Jurist Award for her exemplary leadership and judicial service.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**HON. THOMAS E. MERCURE**

**H**IGHLY REGARDED for his legal acumen and steadfast devotion to the pursuit of justice, Thomas E. Mercure has served the Unified Court System admirably for over 30 years – 25 of them on the Appellate Division–Third Department bench, making him the longest-serving Justice in the Department’s 117-year history. He also led the Department as acting Presiding Justice from 2011 to 2012, during the illness and subsequent passing of the late Anthony Cardona. Just this past January, he graciously stepped into his newest role as Administrative Judge of the Third Judicial District. Undoubtedly, the District will benefit greatly from his vast knowledge and foresight.

A Court of Appeals nominee—who temporarily sat on the high court in 1994 and 2011—Justice Mercure has worn many hats over the course of his distinguished career. Starting in private practice, he subsequently joined the Washington County District Attorney’s Office, serving as First Assistant District Attorney and then as the County’s District Attorney. Justice Mercure was first elected to State Supreme Court in 1981, then re-elected in 1995 and again in 2009. Throughout his tenure, he has lent his time and talents to various committees, including as chair of the State Ethics Commission of the Unified Court System from 1996 to 2003.

Justice Mercure’s contributions to the New York courts and legal community are significant and many. In recognition of his long-standing judicial service, I am delighted to present him with this year’s Lifetime Achievement Award.



## Presentation of Awards

### **HON. LAWRENCE K. MARKS**

*First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge of the Courts*

**I** AM DELIGHTED THIS LAW DAY to present the Unified Court System's prestigious 2013 Merit Performance Awards to four outstanding non-judicial employees. This year's award recipients include a Chief Clerk acknowledged for her leadership and innovative spirit; a Law Library Assistant who regularly goes beyond the scope of her duties; a Drug Treatment Resource Coordinator for whom volunteering is a way of life; and a Court Officer whose presence of mind averted what could have been a tragedy.

SUPERIOR WORK PERFORMANCE

**TRACY CATAPANO-FOX**

*Chief Clerk,*

*Queens County Supreme Court-Civil*

TRACY CATAPANO-FOX'S PASSION FOR THE LAW—and helping people—is apparent from the moment you meet her. This former prosecutor, law clerk and Queens County Women's Bar Association President—the youngest ever in the County—has served as Chief Clerk of the busy Queens County Supreme Court-Civil Term since 2011.

An expert on residential foreclosures, Tracy helped establish the state's first residential foreclosure settlement conference part at the Queens court, with the goal of these statutorily mandated conferences to achieve mortgage modifications and keep people in their homes. Besides coordinating a busy foreclosure part calendar, Tracy works with court administrators to develop policies and procedures to improve the handling of foreclosure matters, also sharing her expertise on the subject at judicial education seminars and bar association events. Additionally, she played an instrumental role in the development of the Queens court's specialized parts for guardianship and matrimonial matters. Even with her myriad responsibilities, she consistently goes out of her way to provide guidance and assistance to court colleagues and the public.

Tracy's innovative stewardship as Chief Clerk of one of the state's busiest civil courts is commendable, and her dedicated efforts on behalf of the Unified Court System and legal profession, extraordinary. I am delighted to honor her with a 2013 Merit Performance Award for Superior Work Performance.

SUPERIOR WORK PERFORMANCE

**CECILIA BEREAN**

*Law Library Assistant,  
Onondaga County Supreme Court Library*

**C**ECILIA BEREAN REGULARLY GOES BEYOND THE SCOPE of her duties as Law Library Assistant at the Supreme Court Law Library in Onondaga County. Joining the law library in 1999, Cecilia was quickly recognized by library patrons and employees alike for her can-do attitude and unfailing courtesy. Her outstanding work ethic and other admirable qualities have since been noted by many throughout the Fifth Judicial District.

Cecilia and her library colleagues were recently called on to provide records management support to other courts in the Fifth Judicial District. She took a leading role in that effort, bringing together the District's employees and technological resources to move this project forward with remarkable efficiency. Over the years, she has played a key part in a variety of law library and court system projects. Presently, she serves as the SEFA-United Way coordinator for the Fifth Judicial District, a responsibility that requires patience and strong planning and communication skills—all Cecilia's strengths.

Cecilia's upbeat outlook and meticulous attention to detail come across in everything she does, whether assisting law library patrons, taking on special projects or responding to inquiries via the court system's telephone information line, 1-800-COURT-NY. It is my pleasure to present her with a 2013 Merit Performance Award for Superior Work Performance.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND  
HUMANITARIAN PURSUITS

**LUCILE MALLARD**

*Resource Coordinator,  
Canandaigua City Court*

THERE SIMPLY AREN'T ENOUGH HOURS IN THE DAY for Lucile Mallard, between her duties as a Drug Treatment Court Resource Coordinator and innumerable volunteer activities in her home city of Geneva and the surrounding Finger Lakes region. Lucile is recognized locally and beyond as a dedicated community leader and human rights advocate, with her good work spanning a range of organizations aiding youngsters, the needy and other underserved populations.

Lucile—the President of the Geneva Chapter of the NAACP for the past 25 years—considers community service a way of life, devoting the better part of hers to fostering racial and ethnic tolerance and helping women and minorities forge paths of leadership. She also travels to local middle and high schools to highlight the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse, sharing with students the knowledge and wisdom acquired over her 30-plus years in the field. A positive force for change, Lucile has a unique gift for uniting people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs, giving a voice to the disadvantaged and motivating youngsters to achieve their full potential.

In appreciation of Lucile's selfless service to her local community and humankind, I am delighted to present her with this year's Merit Performance Award for Community Service and Humanitarian Pursuits.

HEROISM

**SGT. EDWARD CASSIDY**

*Court Officer,  
Suffolk County Courts*

**S**GT. EDWARD CASSIDY'S BRAVERY AND QUICK THINKING proved invaluable on a late afternoon last September, when the off-duty Court Officer observed a violent domestic dispute at a gas station parking lot. Sgt. Cassidy alerted the Town of Southold Police Department, and upon the arrival of local Police Officer Chris Salmon, he directed Officer Salmon to the perpetrator, who had fled into a wooded area.

When Officer Salmon caught up with the perpetrator, the man became extremely combative. A confrontation ensued, with Officer Salmon sensing someone running up behind him and realizing that Sgt. Cassidy had been following throughout the chase. As Officer Salmon struggled with the perpetrator—and the offender tried to dislodge Officer Salmon's gun from its holster—Sgt. Cassidy helped Officer Salmon wrestle the man to the ground and handcuff him. Town of Southold Police Department Chief Martin Flatley, in a letter commending Sgt. Cassidy for his actions that afternoon, wrote, "I have no doubt in my mind that if Sgt. Cassidy had not taken the initiative to follow this pursuit, and jumped in to assist Officer Salmon, the outcome could have been tragic."

We are most fortunate to count Sgt. Cassidy among the courts' highly trained corps of officers. His courage and sharp instincts were critical in averting a potential tragedy that day. It is a privilege to honor Sgt. Cassidy with this year's Merit Performance Award for Heroism.



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