



news

Colorado Judicial Branch
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 29, 2010

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18th Judicial District probation officer wins Judicial Department Award *Colorado Judicial Department recognizes outstanding employees*

DENVER – Christopher West, a probation officer in the 18th Judicial District (Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert and Lincoln counties), has been recognized as *Probation Officer of the Year* in the Colorado Judicial Department’s 2009 Judicial Excellence Awards. The Colorado Judicial Branch annually recognizes a handful of outstanding employees for exemplary work contributing to the high quality of service provided throughout the state’s 22 judicial districts.

Two years ago, West was assigned responsibility for the supervision of juveniles who have a pervasive mental illness, and since has developed a training program presented to adult and juvenile supervision officers within the Probation Department, as well as staff of the district attorney’s office, public defender’s office and the private bar.

West, a former law enforcement officer, also has developed a safety presentation and has established Probation Education and Resource Meetings to educate the people who support the offenders he supervises.

“Chris does not talk to offenders about their terms and conditions of probation as a matter of course,” Probation Supervisor Jeffrey Otto wrote in a nomination letter. “He talks to them as people who have special problems affecting their stability and functioning in their home, school and community.”

A parent of one of the juveniles under West's supervision called him "one of a number of very special people who put their hearts and souls into the work they do to help make life a little better," Otto wrote, saying West's leadership has helped divert offenders from expensive placements and the Division of Youth Corrections to keeping them in the community and using community resources.

The Colorado Judicial Branch includes the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, as well as the state's district and county trial courts. The branch is also home to the Department of Probation Services, which employs more than 1,100 people including nearly 900 probation supervisors and officers. The department's officers are responsible for supervising approximately 7,300 juvenile offenders and 58,000 adult offenders. As of July 1, 2009, the Colorado Judicial Branch employed approximately 3,400 employees, which includes 311 justices, judges and magistrates. In fiscal year 2009, the latest for which full statistics are available, there were 561,374 cases filed statewide at the County Court level, 188,537 cases filed in District Court, 2,809 in the Court of Appeals and 1,643 in the Supreme Court. There were 1,268 cases filed in the water courts.