



Colorado Justice: Celebrating 42 years of fair
and impartial courts through merit selection

news

Colorado Judicial Branch
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 25, 2008

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Magistrate Mary Joan Berenato named *Outstanding Judicial Officer* Eighth Judicial District magistrate receives Colorado Judicial Branch award

The *Outstanding Judicial Officer* in the Colorado Judicial Branch is Magistrate Mary Joan Berenato of the Eighth Judicial District (Jackson and Larimer counties). 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.

Magistrate Berenato, who works a juvenile court docket, was nominated for the award by Miriam Villegas-Negron, the managing court interpreter in the Eighth Judicial District.

"Magistrate Berenato takes her responsibility with juveniles seriously," Villegas-Negron said. "She makes it a point to know each child and his or her family dynamics. The Colorado Judicial Branch is fortunate to count Magistrate Berenato among its finest judicial officers for her delivery of justice and the personal touch that she puts in her interaction with all who appear in front of her."

Magistrate Berenato was praised for starting a level one drug court program designed to help petty offenders who are trying to overcome their substance abuse problems and instead focus on school attendance and employment opportunities. She also was recognized for her work off the bench to enhance a general understanding of the role of the judiciary. Magistrate Berenato regularly takes the time to strengthen collaborative relationships by meeting with

leaders in the community, the general public, the legal community and other branches and agencies of government.

“Magistrate Berenato ensures that access to the justice system is fair and effective,” Villegas-Negron said. “She strives to make herself accessible to all people and treats individuals in a fair and impartial manner.”

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 800 probation officers. The department’s officers are responsible for supervising approximately 7,600 juvenile offenders and 61,000 adult offenders. As of July 1, 2008, the Colorado Judicial Branch employed approximately 3,600 employees, which includes 304 justices, judges and magistrates. In fiscal year 2007, the latest for which full statistics are available, there were 551,197 cases filed statewide at the County Court level, 189,235 cases filed in District Court, 2,548 in the Court of Appeals and 1,534 in the Supreme Court. There were 1,220 cases filed in the water courts.