



PRESS RELEASE

Presentation of the 2018 Merit Awards of the Commission des services juridiques

Montreal, November 19, 2018. – It is with great pride that M^e Yvan Niquette, Chairman of the Commission des services juridiques, presented the Commission des services juridiques' Merit Awards in Montreal on November 16, 2018. These awards recognize the exceptional contribution of employees through their commitment, achievements and accomplishments in furtherance of the organization's mission.

Four awards are presented:

- Two awards: to a lawyer or to one or more teams of lawyers.

And new, this year:

- Two awards: to a member of the support staff and office employees, to a professional or to one or more groups of employees.

This year, the Merit Awards (lawyers) were presented to:

- **M^e Khalid M'Seffar of the Laurentides-Lanaudière Community Legal Centre**, who distinguished himself by handling an exceptional case both in terms of the extent of the legal work involved and the favourable outcome and in terms of the media coverage it received, which furthered the legal aid network's visibility. M^e M'Seffar represented Mrs. Louise Sauvé in the case of *Ville de Saint-Jérôme v. Sauvé*, which was covered extensively by the media and in which the Court of Appeal agreed with him, allowing his client to assert a defence of reasonable care and error of fact in fighting a regulatory parking offence.
- **M^e Olivier Théorêt of the Saguenay-Lac St-Jean Community Legal Centre**, who distinguished himself through his exceptional commitment and dedication, as demonstrated by his involvement in establishing the Programme d'accompagnement Justice santé mentale (PAJ-SM), which was launched on April 3, 2017, and by his ongoing involvement in a number of community organizations.

Over the past year, other lawyers also had some significant achievements and, in that regard, the contributions of M^e Sébastien Caron of the Lower St. Lawrence–Gaspé Peninsula CLC, M^e Valérie Lauzier of the Eastern Townships CLC, M^e Charles Benmouyal of the Montreal CLC, M^e Jessica Bernard of the Québec City CLC and M^e Cynthia Brière of the Québec City CLC should also be highlighted.

This year, the Merit Awards (support staff) were presented to:

- **The team of receptionists, eligibility specialists, paralegals and legal secretary in the criminal and penal section of the Montreal Community Legal Centre**

- ❖ Mirna Baroudy, receptionist
- ❖ Marie-Ève Charland, paralegal
- ❖ Mihaela Cojoc, paralegal
- ❖ Lynda Dehak, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Gabrielle Dubord, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Nancy Jean, paralegal
- ❖ Lorraine Latreille, paralegal
- ❖ Solange Latreille, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Sylvie Mallette, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Audrey Panfili, receptionist
- ❖ Mélissa Paz-Perdomo, legal secretary
- ❖ Josée Ste Marie, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Sageeth Thevamanoharan, eligibility specialist

For their exceptional commitment and dedication in the wake of the Jordan and Cody rulings, as demonstrated by their creativity or innovation in performing their tasks, which contributed to the team as a whole. The team focused on innovating work methods, and their way of functioning was reassessed with the help of engineering and business management students, in partnership with the HEC Montréal. Through their teamwork and collective efforts they were able to catch up on backlogs in critical areas, which made it possible to issue 12,977 certificates and mandates to lawyers in private practice last year.

- **The team of receptionists, eligibility specialists and paralegals in the immigration section of the Montreal Community Legal Centre**

- ❖ Mirianne Dubois, receptionist
- ❖ Catherine Dumouchel, receptionist
- ❖ Mandeep Kaur-Kaura, receptionist
- ❖ Bénédicte Koffi, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Julie Leblanc, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Annie Maisonneuve, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Claudia Pineda, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Jessica Sêna Dossou, receptionist

- ❖ Sylvie Tétreault, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Joanne Thibodeau, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Farida Tran Bahri, eligibility specialist
- ❖ Vira Vitkovska, paralegal

For their exceptional commitment and dedication in the wake of the massive influx to Québec of asylum seekers from the United States, as demonstrated by their creativity or innovation in performing their tasks, which contributed to the team as a whole. The team found creative solutions to their various challenges in order to offer high quality professional services to their highly vulnerable clientele in a crisis situation and under the great pressure placed on them by their clientele and the lawyers representing asylum seekers. Through their teamwork and collective efforts they were able to process 13,368 legal aid applications this past year.

Over the past year, other support staff also had some significant achievements and, in that regard, the contributions of Mrs. Marie-Hélène Dassylva, receptionist at the Québec City (Downtown) legal aid office, and Mrs. Andrée Bergeron, administrative technician at the Québec City CLC, should also be highlighted.

Congratulations to everyone!

Source: M^e Richard La Charité, rucharite@csj.qc.ca
Director, Communications Department
(514) 873-3562, extension 232