



Albuquerque Bar Association Names Cindy Leos 2019 Judge of the Year

Albuquerque, New Mexico, December 6, 2019 — The Honorable Cindy Leos of the Second Judicial District Court has been named 2019 Judge of the Year by the Albuquerque Bar Association.

In announcing the award, the ABA said its selection committee reviewed several nominations, and “in the end, Judge Leos’s efforts this year presiding over Young Adult Court made her the unanimous choice for her impact on the community.”

Young Adult Court is an innovative program established in 2017 in response to research that shows humans’ reasoning ability is not fully formed until the age of 25, and many individuals in this age group who commit crimes can turn their lives around if given the proper support. The program is a partnership among the Second Judicial District Court, the Offices of the District Attorney, the Public Defender, the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Department and several agencies that provide substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling and other support services. The court is proving successful at helping young people address issues—such as drug abuse and lack of mental health treatment—that are driving some of the crime in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County.

The program takes 18 to 24 months to complete, during which time participants must engage in treatment, attend weekly court sessions, provide random urinalysis samples and demonstrate a willingness to make positive changes in their lives. To date, three individuals have graduated from Young Adult Court—all of whom have quit drug habits that proved to be an underlying cause of their criminal activity. Twenty-two other individuals are currently in the program, with an additional 15 undergoing the screening process.

“It was clear from her first day on the bench that Cindy Leos was going to be an outstanding judge,” said Stan Whitaker, Chief Judge of the Second Judicial District Court. “She has demonstrated day after day that she has a clear understanding of her role as a judge and the need to make sure that litigants on both the prosecution and defense side of a case are treated respectfully and fairly in her court. She was the ideal choice to preside over Young Adult Court, and it is no surprise that the Albuquerque Bar Association is recognizing her as Judge of the Year.”

The bar association will formally present the award to Judge Leos at its annual meeting/luncheon at 11:30 AM on Thursday, December 12, 2019 at the Embassy Suites in Albuquerque. The association also will present the Attorney of the Year Award to Vince Ward, who the group said was selected, in part, for his “excellent and tireless advocacy of Chelsea Manning.”

Judge Leos said she is “incredibly honored to receive the Albuquerque Bar Association Judge of the Year Award. It is my understanding that I was selected for this award in large part due to my work with the

Young Adult Court. Presiding over Young Adult Court has been one of the best parts of my job and to be recognized with this prestigious award for doing something that I get such joy out of is simply phenomenal.”

END