

Family Court Judges honored for positive community impact

Two Second Judicial District Family Court Judges recently received accolades for their positive impact on the community.

Judges Debra Ramirez and Amber Chavez Baker are the Domestic Violence Resource Center's 2021 Purple Ribbon Awardees. The Center's staff selected the judges for this award because of the way they handle requests for emergency orders of protection—requests that often come via late night phone calls.

The calls come from DVRC victim advocates who arrive on scene with law enforcement when police respond to domestic violence incidents. "Very often attacks on the victims are pretty scary," said DVRC Executive Director

Vincent Galbiati. Police are required to remain with a victim advocate until they complete their work and there are a number of service components to consider—such as medical attention, weapons, drugs, lethality assessment, and shelter access. Police may get dispatched to another situation meaning they are anxious to leave, adding additional pressure to the advocate's work."

In the midst of these volatile situations, victim advocates often call the Second Judicial District Court's Emergency Protection Order Hotline, where they will find themselves speaking with either Judge Ramirez or Judge Chavez Baker.

"As the advocates are witnessing the aftermath of some of the most brutal and

ugly afflictions that a person can exact on another, the judges' voices make all the difference in each moment of crisis, providing the protection of a person that has been attacked," Galbiati said.

Each year, the advocates designate a Purple Ribbon Awardee among members of the community who help in their quest to alleviate domestic violence victims' suffering. This year, Galbiati said, "Without hesitation, they wanted to recognize Judges Ramirez and Chavez Baker for their unconditional support, professionalism, expertise and calm demeanor—but mostly for the human touch they bring to the field in letting advocates know they are not alone in this. Never have they left the impression that they were on being imposed on."

For their part, the judges said they are honored to receive the Purple Ribbon precisely because the people who are in the field working directly with domestic violence victims decide who receives it.

"I was surprised to receive the award," Judge Chavez Baker said. "Judge Ramirez is the Domestic Violence Judge. She takes most of the calls. I just kind of help take the load off her sometimes. Still, this award means a great deal because it comes from the DVRC staff."

"This is a job we would be doing anyway," Judge Ramirez added. "When we get those calls in the middle of the night, we know someone is in trouble and we have to be there to help. To have the people on the other end of line recognize us in a way that is so special to them is really touching."



In addition to this honor, Judge Ramirez earned recognition from the U.S. Department of Defense for graciously supporting her Trial Court Administrative Assistant Maria Guerreo during the multiple times the military deployed Maria's husband overseas.

"It was a complete surprise," Judge Ramirez said. "Maria told me I had a surprise visitor and this guy walks into my office and you could just tell he was military. He tells me he is from the Office of United States the Secretary of Defense and he is here to present me with the Patriotic Employer Award."

Maria's husband, Hector, then walked in and revealed that he nominated Judge Ramirez for the award in gratitude for her support of Maria during his multiple deployments, including one during which Maria gave birth to the youngest of the couple's four children.

Hector Ramirez recently retired from the military. "He is really grateful that she allowed me to do what I needed to pick up the slack for our family during the times he was away," Maria said of Hector's reasoning in nominating Judge Ramirez for the Patriotic Employer Award. "If I had to leave early to take one of the kids to the doctor, or go to the doctor myself during my pregnancy—whatever it was—she made me feel supported."

Judge Ramirez said giving Maria flexibility as a parent under those circumstances was the least she could do, giving that her husband was fighting for all of us. "I got a beautiful plaque and a flag pin for my robe



Family Court Judge Debra Ramirez, center, earned the DOD's Patriotic Employer award for her support of TCAA Maria Guerreo during the multiple times Maria's husband Hector was deployed overseas by the U.S. Military.