

# Employee of the Year

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It's that time of the year again where our staff takes a few minutes out of their day to nominate their co-workers for our annual employee awards. I am always so impressed by the quality of nominations I receive and the wonderful and amazing things I read about our staff. This year I am pleased to announce that our Probate Court Employee of the Year is **Ms. Julie Ritter**. Many of you may not know Julie because she is truly one of our "behind the scenes" persons. Julie is the Office Leader for our Probate file room.

Julie Ritter started with our court in January 1997 as General Clerical staff. She was initially assigned into the Estates file room (or as we like to refer to it, "The Vault") and was subsequently promoted to a Clerk I, Clerk II and Clerk III. In January 1999, she was offered a position as Judicial Clerk for Judge Sandra Silver. Needless to say, we were sorry to see her go but happy that she remained with the court. Subsequently, when Judge Silver retired we were happy to welcome Julie back in September 2000. Julie was once again promoted to a Deputy Probate Register and assigned to our Mental Health office. In January 2001, Julie interviewed and was selected for the newly created position of Office Leader in the file room. We never forgot Julie's expertise in "the vault."

Julie is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the file room. I cannot overemphasize the value of having the file room running efficiently and effectively. Every time you come to the counter to file a document or come to court for a hearing, the fact that our file room runs smoothly makes your job easier.

In reviewing my files for Julie, I read a wonderful letter written by Judge Gene Schnelz in February of this past year. Judge Schnelz was in the middle of a "particularly acrimonious trial between a mother and a son" and was receiving different stories from the parties regarding an estate. Judge Schnelz contacted our file room and within minutes had the file delivered to him. Judge Schnelz stated that it was so wonderful "to have this type of cooperation between our two courts."

Jill Daly, Chief of Estates and Mental Health, comments that, "Without Julie, our file room operations would grind to a virtual standstill. Even in these technological times, we still file at least 500 documents a day and to the best of her ability, Julie makes sure these documents are pushed through our system." Mary Jo Best, Probate Supervisor, states that everyone here knows that when all else fails and everyone

has looked for a file, you just ask Julie and somehow it becomes "found."

We received several nominations for Julie from her co-workers. From these nominations, her co-workers write the following: "Julie is in charge of interviewing students for job placements with the vault. Thanks to her insight, we have an excellent group of young people working for our department. One of the greatest compliments I could give Julie is that students love working for her. She balances their youthful exuberance with the willingness to work and give it their all." "Julie makes those of us who work for the public look good; she is the epitome of what an excellent court employee should be. I am proud to be one of her co-workers." "Julie is hard working, helpful and enthusiastic with a good sense of humor. She keeps it all in perspective and usually has a smile, a laugh or a story for everyone – all great characteristics required to keep our vault 'beating.'"

Among her many responsibilities, Julie has also made herself the "expert" and go-to person for the operations of our scanner, our new microfilm reader, our new fax machine and our image track system. This is a truly amazing feat considering the volume of day-to-day responsibilities she also carries.

Julie continues to come up with new and innovative ways to handle our court call, including revising our docket sheets and creating ever-improving delivery systems for files to courtrooms. I recall that when we were implementing our new Probate Code, many trusts files had to be terminated. It was Julie's efforts alone that closed almost 600 Probate files from the active status list, thus eliminating additional work for the counter staff and, ultimately, for the public.

On a personal note, I know that I can always call down to the vault and no matter what the problem or concern is, Julie handles it easily, with a smile and with a level of professionalism that we have come to expect from her. As one of her co-workers stated in their nomination, "If the Probate counter staff are the lifeblood of the central office, Julie is the heart that keeps things moving in the vault."

Please join me in congratulating our Probate Employee of the Year, Julie Ritter.

