



City of Bothell™

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BOTHELL JUDGE IS DISTINGUISHED AS JUDGE OF THE YEAR

Snohomish County Bar Association Honors Michelle Gehlsen

BOTHELL, WA (April 8, 2013) – Bothell Municipal Court Judge Michelle Gehlsen has been selected as the Snohomish County Bar Association’s 2012 Judge of the Year. Candidates are nominated by their peers in the judicial community for recent and significant work that furthers the legal profession and enhances the public good. Judge Gehlsen was selected by the Association at their March 21, 2013 board meeting and will be honored during the Association’s Annual Dinner on May 4, 2013.

“Judge Gehlsen was selected as our *Judge of the Year* for her outstanding efforts last year in establishing the *Bothell Youth Court*,” explained Will Steffener, President of the Snohomish County Bar Association.

"I am very proud of the Michelle's service as Bothell's Municipal Court judge," said Robert Stowe, Bothell City Manager. "She is very deserving of this recognition and I congratulate her."

Judge Gehlsen’s desire for a Youth Court was fueled by her concerns over the number of teenage drivers showing up in the adult court system due to charges of reckless and aggressive driving, as well as the increase in cell phone and texting citations. Frustrated by an adult system that did not always resonate with teenage drivers, and mindful of the high number of

serious and fatal accidents that involve teenagers, she sought a way to make a more meaningful and lasting impression on these young drivers.

“The City joins the Bar Association in recognizing Judge Gehlsen’s efforts to assure the Court is able to reach and impress upon young residents the risks of unsafe driving,” said Mayor Mark Lamb. “Gehlsen’s achievements further demonstrate that Bothell is a place of innovation and of a city that works determinedly to serve its residents and businesses.”

Unlike traditional adult courts, youth courts focus primarily on restorative justice. Offenders are truly judged by a ‘jury of their peers’, with a focus on making amends and contributing back to the community. An emphasis is placed on education and prevention, rather than punishment. In many cases, the sentence includes a requirement that the individual must in turn serve as a juror on another case.

“When I became a judge, one of my goals was to positively engage the community with the court system,” explained Judge Michelle Gehlsen. “My efforts in Bothell have been complimented by volunteers, including Professor Camille Walsh and University of Washington Bothell students, by other city department staff to assure that our Court delivers meaningful justice. It is an honor to be recognized for doing what I love and to work in a community backed by its citizens.”

Gehlsen is known for her commitment to improving the justice system. She first served as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Snohomish County where she is credited with having established a pilot program to improve the handling of domestic-violence cases to ensure that victims were not re-victimized by the process of prosecution. On the civil side, Gehlsen also became the county’s expert on the Involuntary Treatment Act. Her work in involuntary commitment hearings required not only a comprehensive understanding of mental health legislation, but the ability to absorb and understand complex medical opinions. In both of these difficult areas, she was known for her compassion and determination to treat vulnerable populations with respect and dignity.

As a member of the judiciary, Judge Gehlsen belongs to the District Municipal Court Judges Association Legislative Committee where she has testified regarding courtroom safety. She is also a strong advocate of youth programs, and has served as a judge on YMCA and Leadership Everett Mock Trials since 2010. In April, 2013 she began teaching “Street Law” at Bothell High School, to educate students about the legal system while also teaching them skills to improve their lives and strengthen their own communities.

Judge Gehlsen moved to Bothell following her graduation from Southern Methodist University School of Law in Dallas, Texas, where she was a member of the Order of the

Barristers and distinguished Board of Advocates, Master level. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Texas State University, graduating *cum laude*.

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