



Federal Defenders Honored

By Michael W. Ross

November, 2013



On May 22, 2013 the Federal Bar Council held a reception to honor the Federal Defenders of Central Islip.

The event took place at the federal courthouse in Central Islip, Long Island. For those who do not often practice in the eastern end of the Eastern District

of New York, the Central Islip courthouse is an impressive and visually striking member of the family of Second Circuit federal courthouses. Completed in 2000, designed by Richard Meier (the federal courthouse in Phoenix shares the same architect), it is, according to the Eastern District Web site, "the second largest courthouse in the country and the largest structure on Long Island." These superlatives are not lost on the visitor: as you approach the massive building from the parking lot — a walk that looks as if it should take a minute, but actually takes five — the building towers above as you approach and quickly instills a sense of awe. The views from the top floor, where you can see nearby New York State Parks, are worth a quick elevator ride up.

The reception was held in the courthouse's bright lobby, with a full complement of food and beverages. The turnout was strong and included at least a dozen members of the federal bench: Chief Judge Carol Bagley Amon, and District Judges Joseph F. Bianco, Denis R. Hurley, Dora L. Irizarry, Joanna Seybert, Arthur D. Spatt and Leonard D. Wexler attended, along with Magistrate Judges Gary R. Brown, A. Kathleen Tomlinson and William D. Wall, and Bankruptcy Judges Dorothy T. Eisenberg and Alan S. Trust.

The honorees that evening were the Federal Defenders of Central Islip. These are the attorneys who represent indigent defendants in criminal cases whose alleged crimes took place "wholly or in substantial part in Nassau or Suffolk County." Since Nassau and Suffolk counties are collectively home to 2.8 million people, the job of these federal defenders is a significant responsibility.

Accepting the night's honor were Federal Defenders Randi L. Chavis and Tracey E. Gaffey. After being introduced warmly by Chief Judge Amon, District Judge Spatt, and Federal Defenders David E. Patton and Peter Kirchheimer, these honorees each spoke eloquently about their many years of public service and

their time in Central Islip. In her prepared remarks, Chavis recalled "open[ing] the office on Long Island in October 1989 with Barbara Ashley," and recognized the work of Yvette Genao and Neomi Lozada who have since provided important paralegal support. Chavis spoke fondly about several members of the Central Islip community who had distinguished themselves over the last 25 years and had, in her words, "left this world a better place." Chavis also took the opportunity to highlight the increasing harshness of federal sentencing during her years of experience, and identified lengthy guidelines sentences for first-time offenders as one example.

Gaffey also spoke of her arrival in Central Islip, in the 1990s, and specifically praised the Central Islip bench: "Personally let me say that since I came to the Central Islip office from the Manhattan office in 1996 it has been my privilege to appear before judges who are unfailingly courteous and who challenge me to give my very best each time I appear before them." Gaffey's remarks also highlighted her concern about the effect of sequestration budget cuts on the ability of federal servants to do their work. With more than five decades of criminal defense work between them, both honorees spoke with sincerity about the strong sense of community at the federal courthouse on Long Island, among prosecutors, lawyers, judges, deputies, clerks, CSOs, and marshals.



Anton J. Borovina, Robert J. Anello, Chief Judge Carol Bagley Amon, Tracey E. Gaffey, Randi L. Chavis, Judge Arthur D. Spatt, and David E. Patton