

Rehnquist Winner Grateful to Spouse



Chief Justice John Roberts, Judge John Surbeck (IN), and Jane Surbeck

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Chief Justice John Roberts presented the Rehnquist Award in the United States Supreme Court Great Hall to Judge John Surbeck (IN) for pioneering work in his state's first prisoner re-entry court. Repeated offences by former prisoners have been dramatically reduced through an exemplary effort to get them employed and on track in their own communities. The program brings new purpose and hope to former prisoners and saves taxpayers money.

Numerous friends and associates from Judge Surbeck's Ft. Wayne, IN, home gathered at a 2012 dinner in Washington, D.C. to witness and celebrate his prestigious National Center for State Courts award. His spouse Jane Surbeck beamed with delight. Later John said of Jane: "I could not have done it without her!"

When, as a 16 year public defender applying for two judicial vacancies in a row, John was not appointed, he saw no point in applying for a third vacancy in a county criminal court. But Jane urged him to persevere and apply again. The third time he was selected and postured for what became groundbreaking work with a problem-solving court. He is grateful for Jane's encouragement and unending support. John was also encouraged by her example and her involvement in community causes.

Jane Surbeck headed the nine day "Three Rivers Festival" in their community featuring a parade, concerts, food and other vendors, entertainment, a raft race, a juried fine arts show, children's activities, a bed race, crafts, a midway, fireworks, and attendance of many thousands of people. She is currently President of the Allen County Christmas Bureau, Inc. to provide needy people with gifts, food baskets, and necessities. She also volunteers as President of three other organizations: her alma mater's St. Joseph Academy Alumnae Association of Adrian, Michigan; Shepherd's House, Inc.; and CORE: Curriculum Opportunities & Resources for Educators. Jane previously served on other boards as Chair, President, &/or Board Member: Indiana State Chapter Multiple Sclerosis Society; Catch a Falling Star, Inc., Eagle's Nest Youth Centre, Inc.; Masonic Learning Center for Children, Inc.; and One Church One Offender. When nominated for a Jefferson Award, her nominator said of Jane: "In her day-to-day conduct I must give Jane the highest praise anyone can receive –her concern for others."

Public service is clearly at the heart of the Surbeck marriage. Thanks to both Jane and John Surbeck for their examples of servant leadership.