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Stuyvesant judge named Magistrate of the Year

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Stuyvesant judge Carrie O'Hare was named the 2020 Magistrate of the Year. Lance Wheeler/For Columbia-Greene Media

STUYVESANT — Town Justice Carrie O'Hare was named New York state Magistrate of the Year on Friday.

O'Hare was selected from among 1,872 town and village justices in the state by the New York State Magistrates Association.

"I have been blessed along the way to have many things happen, but it's not about me today receiving this award," O'Hare said. "It's more about all the judges, all 1,872 that do their job every day, and they do it because it's the right thing to do. They don't do it for fame and fortune."

The Magistrate of the Year award recognizes local judges for their contributions to the judiciary and to their community.

O'Hare served as president of the Columbia County Magistrates Association from 2012-16. She also was a director of the state Magistrates Association from 2013-16.

O'Hare's research, "Making a Difference: Judicial Stewards in the Town and Village Courts of New York State," helped to identify the five traits of a highly effective judge.

She has presented testimony with the state Magistrates Association based on her research to the state Senate and Assembly Judiciary committees, and has presented her findings to the Fifth Department Judiciary at Fort Drum in Jefferson County.

She has been researching the history of the town and village courts in Columbia County and has presented Perpetual Plaques to eight of the county's 21 town and village courts identifying current and past sitting judges and their tenures on the bench as a way of preserving judicial history and recognizing the sacrifices of the families of those who served.

O'Hare accepted the 2020 Magistrate of the Year award in a ceremony Friday. O'Hare was then joined by a number of past and present town and village judges from across New York who accepted the American flag from an honor guard from the state police of Troop K.

The flag is one that had flown over the Capitol Building in Washington at half staff for fallen soldiers.

O'Hare has served as Stuyvesant town judge for 20 years. She was nominated for the 2020 award by Schodack Town Justice Paul Peter.

“There are a number of qualifications which an individual has to measure up to for Magistrate of the Year,” Peter said. “I’ve known Judge O’Hare for over 16 years. I have been highly impressed over that period of time with what she has done for the court system in her own town and for her participation in the New York State Magistrates Association, having served as a prior director and volunteering on numerous committees throughout her tenure. It’s one of the great honors in life to have come across such an individual and have the opportunity to work with them.”

O’Hare is the fifth female sitting judge to receive the Magistrate of the Year award since it was first presented in 1965.

“We all do the best we can and that’s really what this recognition is for, to serve the people of our community and do it the best way we can,” O’Hare said. “We’re not perfect but we’re the people’s judges and we always keep that in our minds. I’m so proud and pleased to be able to receive this today, but today is about all these judges that do their job every day, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and I am so privileged to know so many of them. It’s a great honor.”