



Department of Justice

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ATLANTA U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED **AT ANNUAL U.S. ATTORNEY AWARDS CEREMONY**

ATLANTA, GA-- The Department of Justice held its 26th annual Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA) Director's Awards Ceremony in Washington D.C. today, during which 146 award recipients from more than 30 districts were recognized for their dedication to carrying out the Department of Justice's mission. Among the award recipients were the Northern District of Georgia's Criminal Chief F. Gentry Shelnett, Deputy Chief of the Economic Crime Section Barbara Nelan, Special Assistant United States Attorney Richard Reed, and Information Technology Specialist Michael Laskowski. Recipients nationwide included Assistant United States Attorneys, law enforcement agents, litigation teams and others who have made outstanding contributions in federal, state and local law enforcement.

"These award recipients have been honored for their service and commitment to our country, as well as to their local communities," said Attorney General Eric Holder. "Each of these dedicated servants has carried out the important mission of the Department of Justice. Their accomplishments have advanced the interests of justice on behalf of the American people."

Acting United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates, who attended today's ceremony in Washington said, "Our office is proud of the innovative and dedicated work of our four award winners and all of our employees in Atlanta are proud to work alongside of these dedicated individuals every day in the common goal of justice."

The awards are described as follows:

● F. Gentry Shelnett, Jr., Criminal Chief for Northern District of Georgia, received a Director's Award for Superior Performance in a Managerial or Supervisory Role. Mr. Shelnett joined the USAO in Atlanta in 1987 after several years as a local prosecutor. He served as a line AUSA in the Violent Crimes Section for eight years and then as chief of that section for three years. In 1998, he was promoted to Criminal Chief, a position he has held ever since, under three Presidentially-appointed and two Acting United States Attorneys. During this time, the Criminal Division grew significantly to include nearly 70 prosecutors, and the district itself grew to over 6 million residents, with all the law enforcement challenges that accompany a major metropolitan area like Atlanta. Under his leadership, the Criminal Division has prosecuted mortgage fraud; pursued numerous multi-million dollar investment frauds; aggressively prosecuted public corruption; vigorously prosecuted serious gang cases; established productive Project Safe Neighborhoods and Project Safe Childhood programs; and vigilantly pursued civil rights and human trafficking cases. The quality and importance of the work that Mr. Shelnett has overseen has been repeatedly recognized with Attorney General and Director's Awards, including awards just in the last three years for the Eric Rudolph Olympic Park bombing case; the City of Atlanta corruption case; a 26-defendant international black market peso exchange case; a serial arson case; an investment fraud case that victimized dozens of African-American churches; and a massive mortgage fraud case.

● Barbara Nelan, Deputy Chief of the Economic Crime Section, and Richard Reed, Special Assistant United States Attorney, received a Director's Award for Superior Performance By an Assistant United States Attorney for their remarkably hard and diligent work in the complex investigation and successful prosecution of a massive, \$112 million mortgage fraud scheme that resulted in the conviction of 27 defendants, including the scheme's mastermind, Phillip E. Hill. The Hill case was the largest single mortgage fraud case in metro Atlanta history and among the largest mortgage fraud cases in the nation. The message sent by the convictions was an important component of an integrated prosecution, education, and outreach strategy with our state, local, and community partners that has helped move metro Atlanta and Georgia steadily down in the national mortgage fraud rankings after several years in the unfortunate top position. The Hill case was originally indicted in June 2005, with several superseding indictments in the following years.

The investigative effort to unravel the massive Hill mortgage fraud scheme and the subsequent prosecutions of the main case and related cases required the team of prosecutors, agents, and paralegals to obtain, organize and review hundreds of thousands of pages of documents including bank records, appraisal files, loan files, lender files, and loan closing files, and to interview hundreds of witnesses. The trial of Phillip Hill and 11 co-conspirators lasted for two months. To accommodate the numerous trial participants, the trial had to be held in the district's ceremonial courtroom with extra computers, audiovisual equipment and leased furniture. The government called over 90 witnesses in its case-in-chief, and offered 2,400 exhibits that filled eight five-drawer file cabinets. The

evidence was so voluminous that when it came time for the jury to deliberate, a moving company was used to transfer the evidence from the courtroom to the jury room. In March 2007, Phillip Hill was found guilty on 166 counts of conspiracy, fraud and money laundering. In sentencing Hill, the court found that his fraud scheme had an intended loss of more than \$112 million. Hill was sentenced to serve 28 years in prison – a remarkable sentence for a white-collar criminal – and ordered to pay restitution for actual losses of \$41,764,244.40. Nine of the 11 defendants who went to trial with Hill were also found guilty, including three lieutenants, two appraisers, a loan officer, and three recruiters. In a subsequent trial, another Hill lieutenant was found guilty. Sixteen defendants pleaded guilty, including three closing attorneys, seven loan officers, an appraiser, and five recruiters.

● Michael (Mike) Laskowski, Information Technology Specialist, Northern District of Georgia, received a Director’s Award for Superior Performance in Administration for his outstanding work migrating the district's intranet onto a SharePoint platform and creating “USATube,” a true web 2.0 video blog site, designed to encourage collaboration and provide clear, simple and effective training for employees on issues relating to information and litigation technology. The Justice Department later made USATube a national resource for United States Attorney's Offices. Other United States Attorneys’ Office personnel, like the Litigation Support Manager in the Southern District of California, have now followed Mr. Laskowski’s lead in creating their own USATube videos, and other Districts are in the process of using Mr. Laskowski’s innovative ideas.

Mr. Shelnutt, Ms. Nelan, Mr. Reed, and Mr. Laskowski’s extraordinary work has helped the Department of Justice to continue its mission to enforce all of our nation’s laws, including prosecuting civil rights violations, gang violence and drug crimes, as well as representing our client agencies, conducting civil enforcement, and assisting victims of crime.

The Executive Office for United States Attorneys provides oversight, general executive assistance, and direction to the 94 United States Attorneys' offices around the country. For more information on EOUSA and its mission, visit <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao>.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, Acting United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.