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Media Release

Legal Aid SA recognises commitment of its lawyers

Port Elizabeth – Legal Aid South Africa announced its top lawyers for 2013 at its Annual Achiever Awards ceremony. Deputy Minister of Justice & Constitutional Development, John Jeffery, and Legal Aid SA Board Chairperson, Judge President Dunstan Mlambo, were among the dignitaries in attendance.

Diligence and perseverance epitomise Maanda Madima, an attorney at Thohoyandou Justice Centre, who won the Lawyer of the Year award. Hard work and skill are evident from his record number of acquittals and reduced sentences on appeal. Since joining the High Court Unit at the Justice Centre in 2012 he has filed an impressive number of cases in the Supreme Court of Appeal, won all of them, and notched up five reportable cases.

The commitment and dedication of Legal Aid South Africa's top performing employees were celebrated at the awards that recognise commitment and excellence demonstrated by Legal Aid SA staff who contributes significantly towards delivering quality services and making access to justice a reality for poor and vulnerable people.

Stringent criteria are applied for employees to qualify for these awards. Lawyers who impressed with exceptional passion in serving marginalised people were Godfrey Reed, Abdul Tleane, Gugu Mathebula and Maanda Madima.

The award for Paralegal of the Year went to Godfrey Reed of the Humansdorp Satellite Office near Port Elizabeth, who demonstrated exceptional dedication in tackling and resolving his clients' legal issues. One notable example of Godfrey's passion was when he brought an urgent application to prevent a client's husband, who resigned from his job, from cashing in his provident fund and not giving her her share. Due to Godfrey's intervention, the client's husband's bank accounts were frozen and she received her half of the money.

The Candidate Attorney of the Year award was scooped by Abdul Tleane, who, apart from showing much promise as a young lawyer, passed all his board examinations at his first seating

and contributes positively to the development of his peers by coaching them for their Attorney's Admission Board exams.

Gugu Mathebula's exceptional technical litigation aptitudes saw her walking home with the Upcoming Lawyer of the Year award. The valiant attorney from Witbank Justice Centre is not afraid to raise her voice in defence of the rights of her clients. She challenged the arbitrary decision of a Regional Court Magistrate who had remanded an accused in custody unfairly. Gugu lodged an urgent application in the High Court; her application was granted and resulted in the immediate release of her client.

"The Achiever Awards forms part of Legal Aid SA's recognition programme, which is rooted in performance excellence, commitment and integrity. They are also in line with our organisation's mission, vision and values," says Legal Aid SA Human Resources Executive, Amanda Clark.

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Issued by the Communications Department of Legal Aid South Africa. For more information, please contact the National Spokesperson, Mpho Phasha on 011 877 2081/2143. Visit our website at www.legal-aid.co.za or call the Legal Aid Advice Line on 0800 110 110.