

JUSTICE MATTERS

Mental Health Courts

A unique approach to changing lives

**“I stood before you on that day, a tired, frail
woman with not much to say.**

**Scared and confused as I listened to my fate,
I saw in you a chance on this day,**

To start a journey before it’s too late.”

from the poem “Dedicated to the Honorable Judge Cooper”
by “SM,” a Mental Health Court graduate

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AUDIO



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PAYING TRIBUTE TO THURGOOD MARSHALL

This spring, several Maryland judges, including the chief judge of the Court of Appeals, stepped down from the bench and got up on stage at Bowie State University when they joined respected lawyers and politicians from the region to put on a play, "Full Truth," about the life of Thurgood Marshall. To read more, and to see the video of the play, visit *Justice Matters* online, www.mdcourts.gov.

Listening events, preliminary findings highlight ongoing work to improve access to courts

access to justice COMMISSION

Maryland's courts are listening. For the past year, members of the public have been talking directly to judges and other officials during a series of open listening events, which culminated



in April in the historic courtroom of the state's highest court in Annapolis. During these meetings, members of a special Judiciary commission have been listening to citizens to hear how to improve services and access to Maryland's courts.

The April 2010 meeting was the last of a year-long series of listening events held throughout the state by the Maryland Access to Justice Commission. The Commission, chaired by retired Court of Appeals Judge Irma S. Raker, is a coalition of representatives from Maryland courts, executive branch agencies, legislators, attorneys, social services and faith groups, and legal service providers. Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn of the District Court of Maryland is the vice-chair.

Each year, the state's courts handle more than two million cases. The Commission is working to enhance the quality of justice for people who encounter barriers when they are dealing with the courts, including the challenges faced by people who represent themselves in court. Other barriers include language or literacy issues, challenges due to varying physical abilities, not being able to afford to hire legal help or take time off work to attend to legal issues, or a lack of understanding of the civil justice system in Maryland and the resources available.



"In order to identify areas for improvement, we have been listening to members of the public to hear directly from them what it feels like to come to court, or to seek legal assistance," said Judge Raker. "The Commission's goal is to improve the ability of all Marylanders to use the courts effectively and to obtain legal help when they need it."

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"Many Marylanders are forfeiting critical rights because they do not have access to representation or because they face critical barriers in exercising their rights."

Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn



PHOTOS, VIDEO

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Mental Health Courts

a unique approach to changing lives

Marian Sanders Wright waits anxiously on the hard wooden bench as the names of more than a dozen graduates are slowly recited. This is a special day for the feisty 57-year-old grandmother of two, who is ready to have her say at the culmination of one of the proudest moments of her life.

Finally, as her name is called, she rushes to the side of Judge Charlotte M. Cooksey for a congratulatory handshake and quick photo opportunity as she is awarded her prized 8-1/2 by 10-inch certificate of completion.

Stylishly dressed in a hot pink designer sweater set and matching pink earrings, with makeup and hair artfully done, Wright quickly assumes her post at the front of the room to give her fellow graduates a final encouraging word before returning to the challenges of everyday life. She is the epitome of poise, grace and confidence. She is also a successful graduate of Baltimore City's Mental Health Court.

"We come from all walks of life, age groups, nationalities, races," Wright said as she addressed the June 2009 graduating class. "No, we were not criminals . . . but we had a mental issue."

Just two years earlier, in a fit of rage and indignation, Wright stabbed her family attorney in the hand with a pen. In a traditional court of law, she would have faced incarceration and fines. However, her erratic behavior, severe mood swings and seizures earned her a diagnosis of bipolar disorder and an opportunity for treatment and a second chance in Judge Charlotte M. Cooksey's second-floor courtroom of the John R. Hargrove Sr. District Courthouse in South Baltimore.

Although Wright avoided jail time, Judge Cooksey committed her to 45 days at Spring Grove Hospital Center. The oldest hospital for the mentally ill in Maryland, Spring Grove provides acute, sub-acute and long-term psychiatric care to adults.

At Spring Grove, Wright was a stand-out for her impromptu jazz vocals and offering an encouraging word to other patients who were having problems adjusting to the inpatient treatment center. After her stint at the hospital, Wright was on probation for more than a year. She was assigned a psychiatrist and a neurologist, and underwent a regimen of therapy and multiple medications. Today, she is a new woman and she has a new life.



Marian Sanders Wright

Now retired from owning her own cleaning service, Wright is a role model for her achievements and is often a guest speaker at mental health court graduation ceremonies in Judge Cooksey's courtroom. She serves as the elected volunteer Residential Advisory Board (RAB) delegate for her public housing community, Chase House, representing 187 tenants. She pays for and prepares lunches for residents and hosts other activities. Last year, she was

elected vice president of her tenant council board. She has even met the governor.

"Judge Cooksey's mental health court gave me a second chance to change my behavior and my thinking, and the opportunity to look forward to a productive future," Wright said.

Launched in 2002 as the first in the state, Baltimore City's mental health court is an offshoot of District Court that offers a specialized docket every Monday and Thursday for defendants with mental illnesses. Modeled after drug courts, it is considered a "problem-solving

“Judge Cooksey’s mental health court gave me a second chance to change my behavior and my thinking, and the opportunity to look forward to a productive future.”

Marian Sanders Wright



Judge Charlotte M. Cooksey and Ms. Wright

court” in that it substitutes a problem-solving approach for the traditional criminal court processing. Mental health courts have also been created in Harford and Prince George’s counties. Participants are identified through mental health screening and assessments, and voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan developed jointly by a team of court staff and mental health professionals.

The overarching goal is to decrease the frequency of participants’ contact with the criminal justice system by providing judicial leadership to improve the social functioning, employment linkage, housing needs, treatment, and support services for this very special population, Judge Cooksey explained.

Participants interact with clinical providers, parole and probation staff, prosecutors from the state’s attorney’s office, and other agencies on a recurring basis to provide the support needed to ensure their success, she added.

“Everyone plays significant roles, both collectively and individually,” said Judge Cooksey, who has been working with the court since its inception. “Everybody is necessary for the smooth running and operation.”

Although Judge Cooksey retired from the court in April 2008, she continues to serve as a recalled judge, working alongside Judge George Lipman to address the needs of some of the city’s most troubled residents.

Individualized treatment plans and ongoing judicial monitoring address both the mental health needs of offenders and public safety concerns of communities. The court also works to resolve the underlying problems that contribute to criminal behavior to lower instances of recidivism in this population, Judge Cooksey said. Only misdemeanors and felonies that fall within the jurisdiction of the District Court are heard, and juveniles are not allowed to enter the program. More than 300 individuals are obtaining services and treatment through the court’s specialized program.

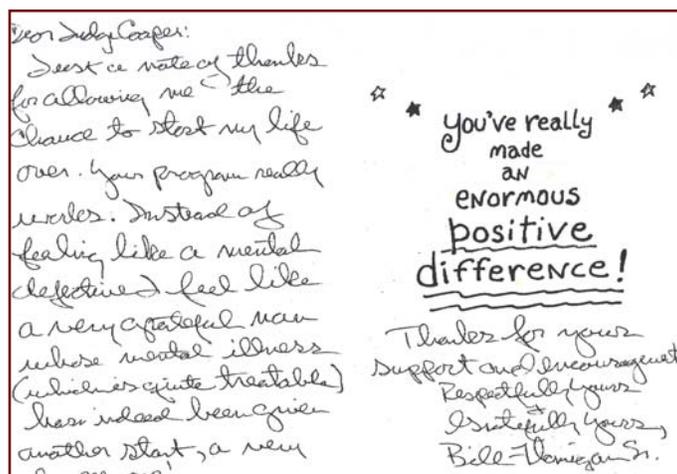
Judge Cooksey cited interagency cooperation as a critical ingredient for the court’s success with clients like Wright.

“[Graduation] is quite an achievement. It involves motivation, hard work and a desire to do better. This is not an easy program,” Judge Cooksey said. “Everyone deserves to be proud of their accomplishments.”

“This is a wonderful program and it is bringing everyone together for a wonderful cause because of the vision of Judge Charlotte Cooksey,” said Baltimore City State’s Attorney Patricia C. Jessamy during Wright’s graduation ceremony. “Our motto is, working together, we can make a difference.”

Most of the proud graduates bear no outward scars of the long and sometimes arduous journey that led them to Cooksey’s courtroom. Their crimes vary in seriousness and in number—from petty theft and larceny to the more serious drug charges and violent crimes. There are some, like Wright, who are highly functioning and, at first glance, display no noticeable symptoms of mental illness, making their problems much harder to

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Letter of thanks to MHC Judge Mimi Cooper from a successful graduate



By Thomas C. Cardaro

Thomas C. Cardaro, a partner in the Baltimore City law firm of Cardaro & Peek, LLC., is the 2009-2010 president of the Maryland State Bar Association. He was invited by Chief Judge Robert M. Bell to contribute a guest column for this issue of Justice Matters.

The Maryland State Bar Association is the voice and the public face of Maryland lawyers. MSBA champions the legal interests of lawyers and the legal interests of Maryland citizens before the Legislature, the Judiciary, the government and the general public. It is my distinct honor and pleasure to serve as president of this dynamic association this year.

MSBA promotes professionalism and civility in the practice of law and serves as a valuable and effective resource to our 23,000-plus volunteer lawyer members, the legal community, the Judiciary and the public. We sponsor public service programs and foster volunteer pro bono service to help those in need.

Our association encourages all Maryland lawyers to answer the call to help those in need by volunteering for pro bono service. Offering pro bono service is part of the fabric of being a lawyer and is truly an integral part of our legal system. Plus, when you help a pro bono client, it gives you such a great feeling inside!

Every year, thousands of Maryland attorneys volunteer their time and expertise to provide free legal services to those in need. In fact, in 2007 (the most recent year for which data is available), more than 1.4 million hours of free legal service was provided by Maryland attorneys to those who would not otherwise have had access to justice. In addition, during the same year, Maryland attorneys contributed more than \$3 million to financially support legal services to Maryland's indigent.

In appreciation of such an exceptional outpouring of support to the community, on October 27, 2009, Gov. Martin O'Malley issued a proclamation officially declaring the week of October 25-31 as "Pro Bono Week in Maryland" and honoring the thousands Maryland attorneys who have volunteered for pro bono service.



Thomas Cardaro

At a gubernatorial press conference, the Governor and Chief Judge Robert M. Bell recognized and thanked Maryland's volunteer attorneys, and indeed, there is much to celebrate.

And how did Maryland attorneys celebrate this special week? By volunteering for pro bono service, of course, and many participated in the 15 local pro bono events held in all corners of the state during National Pro Bono Week.

One shining example of Maryland's attorneys at their finest is the Foreclosure Prevention Project. Born out of a call by Chief Judge Bell for Maryland's attorneys to provide pro bono assistance to homeowners in need, the project, sponsored by the pro bono arm of MSBA, the Pro Bono Resource Center, has trained more than 900 attorneys to handle the issues regarding looming foreclosure actions.

These attorneys volunteered for, and received, appropriate training and are now out in the field actually helping hundreds of homeowners who are in need of assistance while facing the loss of their home. Last year these attorneys provided pro bono assistance to thousands of Maryland homeowners facing imminent foreclosure. This is what our Bar does—helps those in need. MSBA members always step up to the plate when called upon. Time and time again, our members answer the call.

Now, as the foreclosure crisis continues, endangering even more homeowners across the state, the Foreclosure Prevention Project and the MSBA are encouraging more attorneys to answer the call and volunteer to help homeowners try to save their homes. Last fall, a number of Foreclosure Solution Workshops were held to provide pro bono homeowner assistance to Marylanders. Notably, one of these workshops was sponsored by U.S. Congressman Steny Hoyer.

I am very proud of all of the Maryland lawyers who volunteer for pro bono service. But when realizing that thousands of Maryland attorneys provide pro bono service every year, one must wonder WHY do these attorneys do what they do?

There are several reasons. First, these attorneys understand that providing pro bono service to those in need is a responsibility of this Bar which must be met. To shirk this moral responsibility only serves to undermine the justice system.

“Offering pro bono service is part of the fabric of being a lawyer and is truly an integral part of our legal system.”

Second, attorneys obtain personal satisfaction in helping others. It cannot be denied that it feels good when you are able to help your fellow citizen. Third, pro bono attorneys receive training and experience in new areas of law through their pro bono cases. Attorneys receive just as much as they give when providing pro bono service.

MSBA is grateful for the hard, unheralded work that the thousands of Maryland attorneys have performed for their communities through pro bono service. MSBA, working with the Pro Bono Resource Center, will continue to provide assistance to Maryland's attorneys to help them better serve the justice system, the community and their clients. I am very proud of Maryland lawyers

Update on Pro Bono Efforts to Help Homeowners

This just in from the Maryland State Bar Association:

In the last 20 months, more than 1,000 Maryland lawyers have volunteered to help homeowners facing the loss of their homes due to foreclosure. In the summer of 2008, when the Foreclosure Prevent Pro Bono Project began and Chief Judge Bell appealed to the state's lawyers to help, the hope was to attract a cadre of 500 lawyers. Today, more than 1,000 trained volunteers have supported more than 1,900 homeowners who needed legal help.

8



courthouse treasures

Queen Anne's

Standing in the center of Centreville is the oldest courthouse still in continuous use in the state, the sixth oldest still in continuous use in the entire nation. It is also the key feature of the 18th-century equivalent of a “planned community.”

Queen Anne’s County was established in 1706, and the Queen Anne’s County Courthouse and the town of Centreville date back to the 1790s. When the county seat was moved from Queenstown, the town and the courthouse were built together on “Chesterfield,” the plantation home of Judge Joseph Hopper Nicholson. He gave the land and courthouse to the county, and on

June 1, 1796, it was “taken, held and deemed to be the proper Court House of Queen Anne’s County.”

Judge Nicholson, who was Francis Scott Key’s brother-in-law, later became chief judge of the Sixth Judicial Circuit (then Baltimore and Harford counties) and a judge of the Court of Appeals. He was also a member of the U.S. House of Representatives that decided the presidential race of 1800. The history that is told is that Judge Nicholson, though painfully ill, was carried onto the floor of the House, where he cast the deciding vote that made Thomas Jefferson the third President of the United States and his rival Aaron Burr Vice President.



Queen Anne's County Courthouse is the oldest courthouse in the state still in continuous use. It opened its doors in 1796.

Photo by Katherine Hager, chief deputy, Queen Anne's County Circuit Court

Courthouse

is the heart of its community

(It is also said that it was Judge Nicholson who suggested the music for his brother-in-law's poem, the "Star Spangled Banner.")

The courthouse is the core building around which Centreville was created. More than two centuries later, it still anchors the town square and community gathering place. The benches along the tree-lined paths are favorite spots to rest, especially on hot summer days, and the veterans memorials by the flagpoles in front of the courthouse are the site of commemorative events each Memorial Day.

Most people know the courthouse for its statue of Queen Anne, which sits along the path to the courthouse entrance. Less known is the gold painted eagle in the pediment at the top of the building. It is a replica of the wooden eagle, carved by an unknown patriotic craftsman, which graced the building when it opened. The original is on display inside the courthouse.

"It's a privilege to work here," said Clerk of the Circuit Court Scott MacGlashan. "It's one of the most beautiful buildings, not just in the county, but in the whole state."

Beautiful, however, does not always translate to functional. The lobby is small and has been fitted with security screening equipment. Witnesses, visitors, plaintiffs and defendants, sometimes in restraints, all pass through and wait in the crowded open area. In colder months, juries also must wait in the lobby whenever they are sent from the courtroom by Judge Thomas G. Ross, the county administrative judge.

"It does create security issues," Judge Ross said. "The current layout is far from ideal for providing for the safety and security and ease of access for our citizens." The building houses the Circuit Court, the Clerk's Office, licensing and land record office, meeting rooms, ceremonial courtrooms, pro se clinic space, the master's office and courtroom, and more. Several of the same few rooms serve many functions, depending on the day of the week or month.

The struggle of fitting form to function is part of this classic building's history. The courthouse underwent a major expansion after the Civil War to rebuild the structure "on a scale which will change it from one of the most inconvenient to one of the most desirable of our county buildings." The rebuilding cost \$6,800, and was the last time the courthouse changed its exterior appearance in any significant way.

More online

Get a video tour of the Queen Anne's County Courthouse from Circuit Judge Thomas G. Ross, the county administrative judge, and Clerk of the Circuit Court Scott MacGlashan. The link to the local cable-access station's tour is available through the online version of Justice Matters, on the Maryland Judiciary's website at www.mdcourts.gov.

http://origin.peg.tv/pegtv_player?affiliate=affiliate1



PHOTOS, VIDEO

See Justice Matters online
www.mdcourts.gov

Centreville

Helping Women 'Move Forward'

AFTER PRISON



By Prince George's County Circuit Judge Cathy Hollenberg Serrette

When women leave prison, they face difficult challenges as they try to return to their homes and communities. How can we help?

This past October, the second annual Women Moving Forward Reentry Conference was held at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) in Jessup. The participants were 160 women inmates who were scheduled to be released within the year. They attended the conference to learn about resources and information that can help them successfully reintegrate into their communities.

Initiated by the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ), the conference was organized by a coalition of organizations including the Maryland Women's Bar Association, the Maryland Women's Commission, the National Women's Prison Project, and Alternative Directions.

health resources, education, employment preparation, family reunification and access to health care. Everyone enjoyed a lunchtime business wear fashion show followed by an extensive resource fair.

Women within 90 days of release were provided the opportunity to interview with potential employers. All gained interview experience and several secured employment. The closing workshop, "Walking in My Shoes," featured a panel of women who had formerly been incarcerated who shared inspirational testimonies and answered questions about their struggles and success after incarceration.

Judges Sue-Ellen Hantman, Ellen Heller, Theresa Nolan, Irma Raker, Julia Weatherly and I served on the organizing committee, which was co-chaired by U.S. Magistrate Judge Susan Gauvey and Carolyn Mattingly, immediate past chair of the Maryland Commission on Women. Robin Waley served as the conference coordinator.

The Women Moving Forward conference is modeled after Alaska's Success Inside and Out program, which was started by Alaska Chief Justice Dana Fabe, the current president of National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ).

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Chief Judge Brenda Murray and I co-chaired Maryland's first conference in 2008. We took last year's conference a step further this year with resource packages prepared

Dynamic keynote speaker Angela T. Jackson opened the event. Jackson is an author and behavioral health specialist with LIGHT Health and Wellness Comprehensive Services. She is also a former inmate. The day-long event included workshops on affordable housing, financial management, drug and mental



Judge Cathy Hollenberg Serrette

for each attendee based upon the jurisdiction to which she will be returning, a resource fair, and actual, rather than mock, job interviews.

The conference was truly moving on several fronts. Most importantly, of course, was the provision of so many resources and so much information for the women to use upon release. The full-day program included all the accoutrements of any professional conference, including exceptional speakers, conference bags, t-shirts, and non-institutionalized food, all of which relayed a message of respect and demonstrated that there are resources available, a community of people eager to support the women inside and out, and role models who have traveled similarly difficult paths who have reunited with their families, succeeded financially, secured education, and established rewarding lives.

Research has shown that incarcerated women often have physical and mental conditions, family responsibilities, and histories of abuse and non-violent criminal activity that distinguish them from male prisoners. Studies have also shown that concern for children has been a prime motivator for successful rehabilitation for many women. The successful return of women to their communities serves not only the individual women, but their children, families and communities, as well. The conference hopefully helped the participants tackle the often substantial barriers facing them upon release for the benefit and safety of the community and the well-being of all of its residents.

Anyone interested in participating on the organizing committee for next year's conference should contact me at chserrette@co.pg.md.us.

The National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) has been particularly active in Maryland in issues pertaining to women in prisons and girls in detention.

For example, Judge Marielsa Bernard (Montgomery County Circuit) runs the Story Book program through which incarcerated mothers read to their children and the recordings and books are sent to the children; Judge Marcella Holland (Baltimore City Circuit) is active in Baltimore's Girl Scouts program for the children of incarcerated women; Judge Toni Clarke (Prince George's County Circuit) initiated a joint effort between Department of Juvenile Services and University of Maryland School of Architecture to revamp the Waxter Children's Center.

Members of NAWJ have been especially active in establishing housing and parenting programs for women offenders with children and were called on recently to help spread the word about programs available to combat Maryland's growing infant mortality rate.

MDEC: Judiciary Announces Plans for E-Courts

The Maryland Judiciary is working with its justice partners, members of the bar and advocacy groups to update all its court management systems, including integrating new technology, business processes and management practices. The project, known as Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC), will result in the creation of a single Judiciary-wide integrated case management system that will be used by all levels of the courts within the Judiciary.

This new initiative will allow for electronic filing by litigants; e-service; electronic scheduling; the exchange of digital files; and timely data access. An advisory committee, led by District Court Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn, has announced plans to roll-out this new technology in 2012, starting with Anne Arundel County District and Circuit courts, along with the Court of Special Appeals and the Court of Appeals. Visit the MDEC website for more information at www.mdcourts.gov/mdec.



Spotlight on Maryland's 'Mystery' Court

While it has a long history of serving Maryland's citizens since before the beginning of our nation, the Orphans' Court remains a mystery to most people.

It may be the name that confuses people. "Orphans' Court" is simply the historical name for a court that handles wills and estates. Its name derives from the old City of London's Court for Widows and Orphans. Lord Baltimore brought this court system to his colony, and in 1777, the Maryland General Assembly formally established an Orphans' Court and Register of Wills in each county and the City of Baltimore. That structure still operates today.

The Orphans' Court is the court that nearly all citizens will have contact with at some point, says Baltimore County Orphans' Court Judge Theresa A. Lawler. The 11-year veteran judge heads the Maryland Conference of Orphans' Court Judges, which serves as an advisory group to Court of Appeals Chief Judge Robert M. Bell.

Three Orphans' Court judges sit in the City of Baltimore and each of Maryland's counties, except Harford and Montgomery counties. (In those two counties, Circuit Court judges sit as Orphans' Court judges.) Orphan's Court judges run for general election every four years. Maryland's Constitution requires Orphans' Court judges to be Maryland citizens and residents of their jurisdiction for at least 12 months before their election, but the state Constitution does not require Orphans' Court judges to be lawyers. Currently approximately one-third of the Orphans' Court judges are attorneys and two-thirds are lay judges.



The Orphans' Court – What is it?

By Baltimore County Orphans' Court Judge Theresa Lawler

The Maryland Orphans' Court is the state's probate court. It also has jurisdiction over Guardianships of minors. In simpler terms, the main job of the Orphans' Court is to supervise the handling of estates of people who have died—with or without a will—owning property in their sole name.

A person who has died is known in the Orphans' Court as a "decedent." When a decedent owns property that does not otherwise pass to a designated beneficiary such as with jointly owned property



Judge Theresa Lawler

or property held in trust, an estate must be opened. The estate might consist of a car, boat, jewelry/heirlooms, cash, bank accounts, stocks, bonds, various types of business interests or real estate. The value of the estate may be just a few hundred dollars or it may be several million. Maryland provides for an orderly process to transfer those assets. This process sometimes is referred to as "probate proceedings".

When a person dies with a Last Will and Testament, that will must be filed with the Register of Wills' office in the county or

In Maryland, you can entirely disinherit your child, but not your spouse.

city where the decedent had lived. The will generally names the person who will handle the decedent's final affairs and lists how beneficiaries are to receive distributions from the estate.

(An interesting fact: Under Maryland law, someone can disinherit his or her child, but a surviving spouse cannot be entirely disinherited.)

If the decedent dies without a will, that is, "intestate," Maryland laws determine who has the highest priority to be appointed to administer the estate and inheritance decisions. Whether or not there is a will, when there are probate assets (assets in the decedent's sole name), a person—referred to as a personal representative—must be appointed to administer the estate. The personal representative is responsible for identifying the decedent's assets, making sure that valid final debts, administration expenses and taxes are paid from the estate, and that remaining assets are distributed to the proper beneficiaries (if there is a will) or to the legal heirs (if there is no will).

Some estates may qualify for a streamlined procedure called "modified estate administration." In other situations the estate may qualify for a "small estate proceeding," which allows the estate to be closed quickly.*

In all other estate proceedings ("regular estates"), a personal representative must file an Inventory and periodic 'administration accounts' with the Register of Wills. Generally, most regular estates are wrapped up within nine to 18 months of the decedent's death.

What do Orphans' Court judges do?

Some estates proceed smoothly, and, other than seeing the Orphans' Court judges' signature on various estate documents, a personal representative and/or beneficiaries or heirs may have no direct contact with the Orphans' Court judges.

In other estates, however, disputes arise, and then Orphans' Court judges hold formal hearings. For example, Orphans' Court judges may have to determine: the validity of a particular will or codicil (an amendment to the original will); proper beneficiaries or heirs and/or amounts to be distributed to them; who should be appointed personal representative; whether to remove a personal representative who has not

properly carried out his or her duties; or what claims (and amounts) may be paid from the estate. Sometimes there are disputes concerning payments to be made to the personal representative or estate attorney (if there is one).

In formal hearings, the Orphans' Court judges—like any other trial court judges—must consider the evidence submitted (including testimony) and apply the appropriate Maryland laws in order to resolve the disputes. However, due to the nature of the proceedings they handle, Orphans' Court judges frequently become skilled in dealing with the emotions of grieving families.

If property is due to pass to a minor (in Maryland, someone under the age of 18) and there is no other procedure in place to protect the assets (such as a trust), the Orphans' Court has jurisdiction to appoint someone as guardian of the property of the minor. In such cases the guardian is under the supervision of the Orphans' Court and where the assets due to the minor are \$10,000 or more, the guardian must file annual reports. In certain situations a Guardian of the person of a minor may need to be appointed to care for the child, including making decisions regarding education and health care.

* If the value of the estate assets is \$50,000 or less if passing to a surviving spouse or \$30,000 or less if passing to someone other than a surviving spouse.



Helping those who represent



Themselves

Howard County Circuit Court's *Self-Help* Program Growing by Popular Demand

By Sandy Brewer, librarian, Howard County Circuit Court Law Library and Catherine McGuire, Outreach Services, Maryland State Law Library

This article is part of a series that showcases different court programs available around the state that help people who represent themselves in legal issues. These people are often referred to as self-represented or pro se litigants.

Self-represented litigants (SRLs) with civil legal issues have several options for free legal help in Howard County.

The Circuit Court for Howard County launched its Civil Law Self-Help Center in April 2008 as a pilot project. Created to meet the needs of self-represented civil litigants who do not qualify for Legal Aid, yet cannot afford an attorney, the center was so successful that a regular, standing program was launched that summer.

Now, the center is hosted from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Tuesday in the Law Library at the Circuit Court for Howard County. The law librarian schedules attorneys who express an interest in pro bono work to staff the center. These attorneys provide free legal advice in civil, non-domestic matters to walk-in visitors. Because there is a wide range of civil matters, attorneys find it useful to have the center located in the Law Library. The law librarian provides information, both in print and online, to help the attorneys and the SRLs in preparing for their

cases. Some areas of the law that the center can help with include landlord/tenant, contracts, appeals, small claims, expungement of records and homeowner association disputes.

Since the Civil Law Self-Help Center's successful launch, the Circuit Court for Howard County has expanded the center into the community, partnering with the Howard County Public Library to provide additional assistance to the self-represented. Center hours are offered two evenings a month, 6 to 8 p.m., in the meeting room of Howard County Public Library's East Columbia Branch.

Like many counties in Maryland, Howard County has a Family Law Assistance Program. The program has been a success for more than a decade, with attorneys helping 273 self-represented litigants in just the first quarter of FY 2010. The program is located at the Howard County Circuit Court in a newly remodeled room with a computer, printer, phone, conference table, sofa and toys for children who accompany their parents.

This past July, the law librarian began helping the Family Law Office schedule attorneys to staff this program. Volunteer attorneys provide free family law

advice to self-represented litigants on a walk-in basis on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At the same time, the program began offering evening hours, similar to the Civil Law Center. Once a month, attorneys provide free legal advice from 6 to 8 p.m. in the East Columbia Branch Library meeting room.

Both of the Circuit Court's pro bono programs require those seeking free legal advice to have low income. This eligibility requirement helps the programs to meet their mutual goal—helping the working poor who are unable to pay for legal services. Client income eligibility guidelines are based on household income information from Maryland Legal Services Corporation. Also, visitors to the programs must fill out an Intake Sheet and sign an Agreement for Limited Legal Advice.

More assistance programs are being developed. The Howard County Pro Bono Committee, a 10-member group made up of local legal community and citizen representatives, has been studying further options for the self-represented litigant (SRL). The committee is working to establish an integrated, centralized pro bono program in Howard County. The Committee plans to create guides to empower SRLs with information. The committee also plans to develop educational programs such as speakers to inform not only the SRL, but attorneys as well. The committee may start an additional civil pro se clinic, one day a week, at the District Court for Howard County.

District Court Launches Glen Burnie Self-Help Center to Provide Free Legal Assistance

To enhance the ability of self-represented litigants to navigate the courts, District Court has launched a new Self-Help Center pilot project in Glen Burnie. Modeled after the successful Family Law Self-Help Centers that operate in the 24 Circuit Courts, the new center opened in December 2009 and is helping court users represent themselves in small claims, landlord-tenant and other civil matters. The Center offers two full-time attorneys (one a supervising attorney), a paralegal and an administrative assistant. Staff members provide basic information, legal advice and assistance in completing court forms. Users can revisit the program for assistance in preparing for a court proceeding or additional assistance as their case proceeds. The site also provides users with state-of-the-art interactive, touch-screen computer technology to assist with the preparation of legal documents. All services are provided for free.

To date, the Glen Burnie center has served more than 700 individuals. The site also offers mediation and on-site assistance for victims of domestic violence through the YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County.

To learn more, contact:

- Circuit Court for Howard County, Civil Law Self-Help Center, Circuit Court Law Library, Sandy Brewer, law librarian (410) 313-2135 or sandy.brewer@mdcourts.gov
- See the Law Library's website for details on evening hours at the East Columbia Branch mdcourts.gov/circuit/howard/lawlibrary.html
- Circuit Court for Howard County, Family Law Assistance Program Circuit Court Family Law Office Lisa Mohink, director, or Sandy Brewer, law librarian (contact information above) (410) 313-2225 or lisa.mohink@mdcourts.gov
- See the Family Services website for details on evening hours at the East Columbia Branch <http://mdcourts.gov/circuit/howard/family.html>

More online

The online version of *Justice Matters* includes links to the websites for the Howard County Circuit Court Law Library and the Family Law Assistance Program, as well as e-mail links for more information. *Justice Matters* is posted on the Maryland Judiciary website, www.mdcourts.gov.



SEE WEB

See Justice Matters online
www.mdcourts.gov





TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE ORDERS

heard via video link in
Montgomery County

Victims of domestic violence who come to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center now have safer and easier access to justice. Last fall, the Maryland Judiciary launched a pilot program to hear requests for temporary protective orders by way of a live video link. Through this technology, victims of domestic violence who come to the Family Justice Center in Rockville can ask for a temporary protective order without leaving the security of the center.

Video conferencing is done for temporary protective orders in Montgomery County courts that are *ex parte*—without notice to or the presence of the other party.

“The Judiciary is offering video conferencing as a way to help protect victims of domestic violence and improve access to and safety in our courthouses for all Marylanders,” said Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn of the District Court of Maryland. “Victims no longer will have to leave the safety and security of the Family Justice Center to file petitions for protection. This will benefit victims, families and the general public we serve.”

The Montgomery County Family Justice Center opened this past spring in Rockville. Staff from the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, Office of State’s

Attorney, Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Police, House of Ruth and other private non-profit organizations work together to provide services for domestic violence victims at the center, including help filing temporary protective orders. Protective orders generally apply to people in domestic relationships, and are issued by judges when petitioners have proved one of the following has occurred: an act that caused serious bodily harm or has placed the petitioner in fear of imminent bodily harm; an assault; rape or sexual offense; false imprisonment; or criminal stalking.

Last year, Montgomery County courts granted more than 1,850 temporary protective orders. Statewide, more than 18,400 temporary protective orders were granted in Maryland’s courts.

“In addition to easier access to our courts, video conferencing reduces the danger to the victim of encountering the offender at or near the courthouse,” Judge Clyburn said. “This plan also provides more flexibility in scheduling temporary protective order cases, which is a more effective use of court time.” While they are waiting for their video hearing, victims can also receive other critical services at the Family Justice Center, Judge Clyburn noted.

Video conferencing, which is operating as a pilot program at the Montgomery County courts, was developed in consultation with court officials, District and Circuit Court judges, the Clerk of the Circuit Court, court staff, Montgomery County government, members of the Maryland Bar Association, vendors, and providers of video conferencing systems. Private funding for the equipment for this program was provided through a grant from the Verizon Wireless Hopeline Foundation.

The Montgomery County Family Justice Center has a special room where children can play under the

“Statistics have shown that the most vulnerable time for domestic violence victims is immediately following the issuance of a temporary protective order.”

**Chief Deputy Darren Popkin,
Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office**

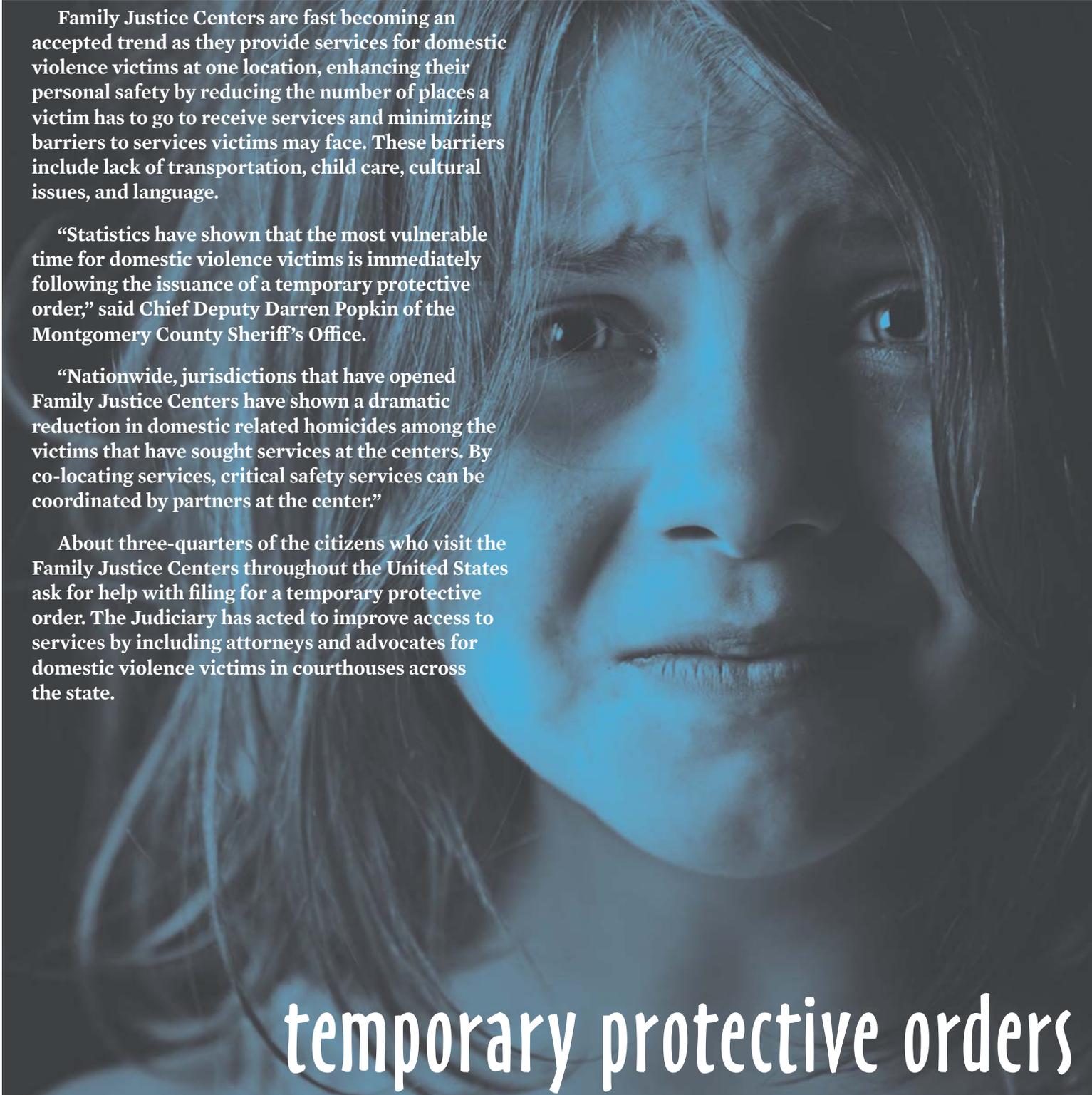
care of trained volunteers. “Court buildings are not an ideal place for children, and video conferencing has an added benefit of helping to ease the stress on children, as well as reducing the disruption that is often caused by children in the courthouse or courtroom,” said Pam Harris, court administrator for the Montgomery County Circuit Court.

Family Justice Centers are fast becoming an accepted trend as they provide services for domestic violence victims at one location, enhancing their personal safety by reducing the number of places a victim has to go to receive services and minimizing barriers to services victims may face. These barriers include lack of transportation, child care, cultural issues, and language.

“Statistics have shown that the most vulnerable time for domestic violence victims is immediately following the issuance of a temporary protective order,” said Chief Deputy Darren Popkin of the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office.

“Nationwide, jurisdictions that have opened Family Justice Centers have shown a dramatic reduction in domestic related homicides among the victims that have sought services at the centers. By co-locating services, critical safety services can be coordinated by partners at the center.”

About three-quarters of the citizens who visit the Family Justice Centers throughout the United States ask for help with filing for a temporary protective order. The Judiciary has acted to improve access to services by including attorneys and advocates for domestic violence victims in courthouses across the state.



temporary protective orders



as of February 2, 2010

Appointments

Hon. Kendra Y. Ausby to the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. John C. Themelis.

Hon. Paul M. Bowman to the Circuit Court for Kent County, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. J. Frederick Price.

Hon. S. Ann Brobst to the Circuit Court for Baltimore County, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. John O. Hennegan.

Hon. Videtta A. Brown to the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, filling a new judgeship created by the General Assembly.

Hon. Ronald H. Jarashow to the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, filling a new judgeship.

Hon. Laura S. Kiessling to the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. Michael E. Loney.

Hon. Cheryl A. McCally to the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. Ann S. Harrington.

Hon. Thomas V. Miller, III, to the District Court for Anne Arundel County, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. Robert C. Wilcox.

Hon. Michael Pearson to the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. Ronald D. Schiff.

Hon. Charles J. Peters to the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. Charles G. Bernstein.

Hon. Joseph M. Quirk to the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, filling a new judgeship.

Hon. Stephen J. Sfekas to the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. John M. Glynn.

Hon. Dana Moylan Wright to the District Court for Washington County, filling a vacancy created by the retirement of Hon. Ralph H. France.

Retirements

Hon. Charles G. Bernstein, Circuit Court for Baltimore City.

Hon. Lawrence R. Daniels, Circuit Court for Baltimore County.

Hon. Ralph H. France, District Court for Washington County.

Hon. John M. Glynn, Circuit Court for Baltimore City.

Hon. Ann S. Harrington, Circuit Court for Montgomery County.

Hon. John O. Hennegan, Circuit Court for Baltimore County.

Hon. Michael E. Loney, Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County.

Hon. J. Frederick Price, Circuit Court for Kent County.

Hon. Ronald D. Schiff, Circuit Court for Prince George's County.

Hon. John F. Slade, III, District Court for St. Mary's County.

Hon. John C. Themelis, Circuit Court for Baltimore City.

Hon. Dexter M. Thompson, Jr., Circuit Court for Cecil County.

Hon. Robert C. Wilcox, District Court for Anne Arundel County.

Deaths

Hon. Arthur A. "Otts" Anderson, District Court for Anne Arundel County, 1980-1984.

Hon. Robert E. Cahill, Sr., Circuit Court for Baltimore County, 1990-2002.

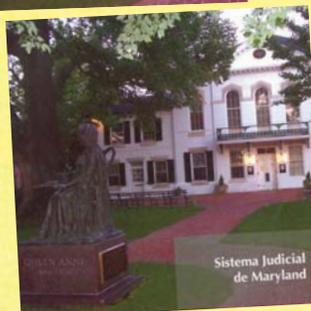
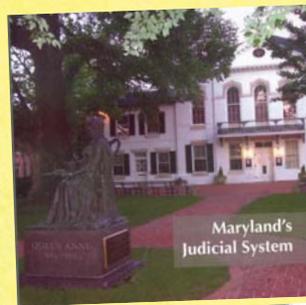
Hon. J. William Hinkel, Baltimore County District Court, 1971-1981 (first administrative judge, 1971-1976); Circuit Court for Baltimore County, 1981-2002.

Hon. Joseph M. Mathias, Circuit Court for Montgomery County, 1965-1981.

Hon. William C. Miller, District Court for Montgomery County, 1980-1982; Circuit Court for Montgomery County Circuit Court, 1982-1996.

Hon. Donald M. Smith, District Court for Carroll County (first Carroll County District Court judge), 1971-1995.

"Maryland's Judicial System" and "Sistema Judicial de Maryland"



A new brochure that introduces Maryland's Judicial System is available in English and Spanish versions from the Office of Communications and Public Affairs.

Tel: 410-260-1488 or email communications@mdcourts.gov



CONTACT US

congratulations

as of February 2, 2010

Howard County District Judge Neil Edward Axel received an Award of Excellence from the Bar Foundation of Howard County. Judge Axel was presented with the award at the Foundation's annual Meeting of Fellows in recognition for "his service and leadership in the legal community and his long-term commitment to community involvement both personally and from the Bench which has improved not only the administration of justice but also the quality of life for Howard County residents."

Chief Judge Robert M. Bell of the Maryland Court of Appeals received the Distinguished Service Award from the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Maryland at its annual scholarship dinner. Judge Bell received the award, which is the APABA-MD's highest honor, for his service to the Asian Pacific American community.

Washington County Circuit Judge W. Kennedy Boone, III, received the "Commitment to Community" award from the county's Department of Social Services. The award is the agency's highest honor for a community leader who has provided services that benefit vulnerable children, adults and families in Washington County.

Ramona B. Buck, MACRO public policy director, received the Robert M. Bell Award from the ADR Section of the Maryland State Bar Association for her outstanding contributions to alternative dispute resolution in Maryland. The award is named in honor of Maryland's Chief Judge Robert M. Bell for his work in promoting the use of alternative dispute resolution programs and activities in the Maryland Judiciary, schools, government and communities.

Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn of the District Court of Maryland was the keynote speaker for MADD Maryland's annual event to honor law enforcement officers on the Eastern Shore who have worked toward a "common mission to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime and prevent underage drinking."

The District Court of Maryland received the Commitment to Conflict Resolution award from Community Mediation Maryland during CMM's fourth annual gala. The District Court received the award for its work "with CMM and community mediation centers throughout Maryland to ensure that people have access to mediation before they file court charges, once they file and before they go to court and even on the day of the trial."

Baltimore City Orphans' Court Judge Karen C. Friedman was named to the Board of Trustees of the University of Maryland College Park.

MACRO Deputy Executive Director Lou Gieszl was elected president of the national Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR). Gieszl will serve a one-term term for 2010-2011.



Retired Baltimore County Circuit Judge John O. Hennegan received the National Child Support Enforcement Association's 2009 Judicial Excellence Award. Judge Hennegan was praised for his development and management of the Baltimore County Circuit Court's Family Employment and Support program, which the association said, "is the type of program that sets an excellent example for courts and agencies across the United States."

Baltimore City District Judge C. Yvonne Holt-Stone was named a 2009 "Leadership in Law" honoree by the *Maryland Daily Record*.

Cheryl L. Jamison, Quality Assurance Director for MACRO (Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office), has been appointed to a three-year term on the board of directors of the national Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR).

Prince George's County District Judge Patrice Lewis was named a 2009 "Leadership in Law" honoree by the *Maryland Daily Record*.

Retired Court of Appeals Judge Irma S. Raker received the Maryland State Bar Foundation 2009 Annual H. Vernon Eney Award, the highest award given by the Foundation, for outstanding leadership in working to improve government and the administration of justice. The award was created in 1984 as a tribute to H. Vernon Eney, who recommended and led the effort for significant changes in government at the state and local levels.

Retired Court of Special Appeals Judge Andrew L. Sonner was named the recipient of the Maryland State Bar Association J. Joseph Curran Award. The award is given to the government or public interest lawyer who selflessly serves the public good and furthers the goals of better government and societal standards.

Baltimore County District Judge Robert Steinberg received the MSBA Anselm Sodaro Judicial Civility Award. The Sodaro Award is presented to a judge who has demonstrated exceptional judicial temperament, patience, civility and courtesy. The MSBA established this award in 1998 in honor of Judge Anselm Sodaro.

Retired Howard County Circuit Judge Dennis M. Sweeney was named as one of 60 Influential Marylanders of 2010 by the *Maryland Daily Record*.

Baltimore City Circuit Judge David Young was named a 2009 "Leadership in Law" honoree by the *Maryland Daily Record*.

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770 adoptions in
Maryland last year

FOCUS

Families in the Making

on Adoption

Maryland's courts helped dozens of children become members of permanent families during statewide celebrations of National Adoption Day in November. The official day was Saturday, Nov. 21, but events were held throughout the week.

This excerpt from an article in St. Mary's County's The Enterprise newspaper on Nov. 20, shows why judges say that adoptions provide some of the courts' most joyful moments. By reporter Jesse Yeatman and reprinted by permission of The Enterprise.

Tara and Ken Sutherland of Great Mills had their wish come true Tuesday morning as the adoption of Damian, 2, was finalized.

"We wouldn't trade him for anything in the world. He means everything to me," Tara said.

The coupled has fostered six other children over the last few years, all of whom were reunited with their biological parents. Ken Sutherland just retired from 22 years in the Navy, and as they both approach age 40, Tara Sutherland said, they felt adoption was the right thing to do to complete their family.



Joanne Sobola of California and her newly adopted son, John Jared Sobola, 3, second from right, have photos taken with his newly adopted family, including sisters, Sidney, 8, left, and Shamaia, 11, outside a courtroom at the St. Mary's County Courthouse.

Tuesday morning was adoption day at the St. Mary's County courthouse as lawyers and Circuit Judge Karen Abrams peppered the Sutherlands and three other adoptive families with questions about relationships, houses, health and financial situations.

The parents, and sometimes the children, were brought to tears as they tried to put their love into words.

"He's like my shadow. Everywhere I go he's right there with me," Ken Sutherland said of Damian.

Derek McClure and Kelly Hewitt of Lexington Park provided foster care for Jamari since he was 11 months old. Now 3, Jamari entered the courtroom with his dads Tuesday morning to make his family official.

"He's part of our God-created family. We love him just like he was our own child," McClure said.

In the courtroom a strong showing of family and friends, some as far away as North Carolina, gave their support to the couple.

"As a couple, we've always wanted children," McClure said. The two have been domestic partners for more than a decade.

Pam Curtis has five boys of her own but has also provided care for two sisters, Zodie, 10, and Markia, 12, who are relatives. The girls said that they are happy to be with their adoptive mother but also happy to stay together.

For Joanne and John Sobola of California, adopting John Jared, 3, was special. They had cared for the boy since he was an infant and have two other adoptive children and others in foster care.

Joanne Sobola offered encouragement to anyone considering fostering or adopting a child: "It's the best. Your world will never be the same."

The state set the bar high this year for St. Mary's County social workers—they aim to have 21 adoptions completed this fiscal year, which ends June 30. There were 770 adoptions finalized statewide last year.

“We wouldn’t trade him for anything in the world. He means everything to me.”

Tara Sutherland

HOW THE CIRCUITS CELEBRATED NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

Anne Arundel County Circuit Court held its third annual National Adoption Day on Thursday, Nov. 19, at 9 a.m., in the courthouse, when adoptions were finalized for 11 children ranging in age from less than one-year-old to 18. Judge Michael E. Loney presided.

In the Baltimore City Circuit Court, a record number of children—56—became members of their new families at the same time on Saturday, Nov. 21. Baltimore Circuit Court Administrative Judge Marcella A. Holland, Judge Audrey J.S. Carrion, and Judge Edward R.K. Hargadon presided over the adoptions in the Ceremonial Courtroom in the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse.

At the Baltimore County Circuit Court, the presiding judges, retired Judge John O. Hennegan and Judge Sherrie R. Bailey, are themselves adoptive parents. They finalized almost a dozen adoptions in the Old Courthouse Ceremonial Courtroom.

Montgomery County Circuit Court celebrated National Adoption Day on Friday, Nov. 20, in the Ceremonial Courtroom. Seven members of the Montgomery County bench—Judge Cindy Callahan, Judge Richard Jordan, Judge Marybeth McCormick, Judge Terrance McGann, Judge Katherine Savage, Judge Louise Scrivener, and retired Judge Ann Sundt—took part.

Prince George’s County Circuit Court helped adoptive parents welcome 14 children into their families during its National Adoption Day event on Thursday, Nov. 19, in the



Kelly Hewitt of Lexington Park holds his son, Jamari, 3, in St. Mary’s County Circuit Court during an adoption ceremony as he and his partner, Derek McClure, await a ruling from Circuit Judge Karen Abrams. Four other children were also officially adopted that morning.

photos by Reid Silverman
reprinted by permission of *The Enterprise*

Prince George’s County Court House. Judges Larnzell Martin, Jr.; and Melanie Shaw Geter assisted Judge William D. Missouri, circuit and county administrative judge for the Seventh Judicial Circuit, Prince George’s County.

St. Mary’s County Circuit Court celebrated six adoptions on Tuesday, Nov. 17, a number that represents more than a quarter of the county’s goal for adoptions for the year. Judge Karen H. Abrams presided in St. Mary’s County Circuit Court.



access to JUSTICE commission (from p. 3)

More than 400 advocacy organizations were invited to attend the listening events and to bring clients with them who have a story to tell that can inform the Commission's work.

The Commission was created in 2008 by Court of Appeals Chief Judge Robert M. Bell to develop, coordinate and implement policy initiatives to expand access to the state's civil justice system. The Commission's primary focus includes landlord-tenant cases, divorce, child custody issues, small claims and debt collection, domestic violence and other non-criminal case types.

Lack of funding blocks access for many Marylanders, interim report notes

Late last fall, a year after its launch, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission issued an interim report citing insufficient funding for legal services for the poor, among other barriers, which leaves countless Marylanders without meaningful access to the courts or the help they need to resolve their legal problems.



The report made 62 substantive recommendations that reflect three general areas that will require collaborative problem-solving by the Judiciary and its justice system partners:

- Ensure stable and sufficient funding to support the civil legal services delivery system through which low-income Marylanders receive legal help.
- Create innovative legal practices, court processes and services to enhance the ability of all persons, including the self-represented, to use the courts or solve legal problems.
- Operate courts and services to address the special needs of vulnerable populations, ensuring that facilities and services are safe, convenient and accessible.

Maryland, like many states, faces a critical shortage of funding for civil legal services, due, in part, to the current economic downturn. In its report, the Commission examines the range of funding options used by other states to address this critical need, and makes some recommendations for strategies that might be adopted in Maryland to stabilize and support the civil legal services delivery system. The report explains, "Before we can provide civil justice to all Marylanders, we need to ensure that individuals can obtain legal representation when they need it. Adequate funding will help ensure Maryland has a robust civil legal services delivery system." (Interim Report, p. 2).

According to the report, Marylanders are appearing without counsel in the courts in record numbers. The Commission makes a number of recommendations to enhance the ability of the self-represented to navigate the court system. Other recommendations address the barriers faced by critical populations in Maryland, or are designed to enhance the public understanding of the civil justice system and legal services.



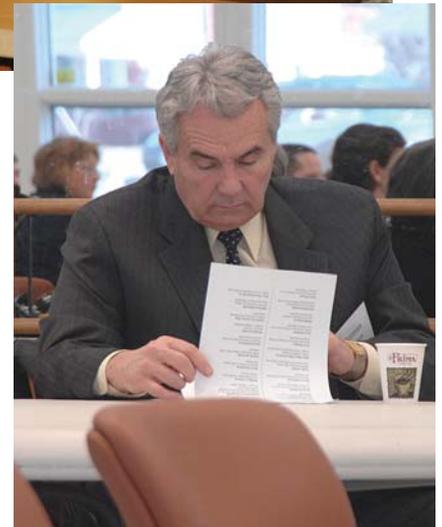
“Many Marylanders are forfeiting critical rights because they do not have access to representation or because they face critical barriers in exercising their rights,” said Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn of the District Court of Maryland, vice chair of the Commission.

More online 

A video message from retired Court of Appeals Judge Irma S. Raker, chair of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, is available on the Maryland Judiciary’s website: www.mdcourts.gov/mdatjc. There are links to Judge Raker’s message, the Commission’s interim report, and more on *Justice Matters* online.



 **PHOTOS, VIDEO**
See Justice Matters online
www.mdcourts.gov



access to JUSTICE

Mental Health Court

(from p. 4)

“Judge Cooksey was my biggest fan. I was so excited that somebody saw something in me and they thought I was worth saving.”

Rosalie Mosley



Rosalie Mosley

“They knew I wanted to get my life straight and they gave me the tools.”

Rosalie Mosley

detect. Others may demonstrate more obvious eccentric or erratic behaviors tied to developmental disabilities, trauma disorders or more serious mental illnesses.

Mental illness in Maryland

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Maryland, mental illness refers to a group of disorders causing mild, moderate or severe disturbances in thinking, feeling, and relating. These disorders are influenced by biochemical disturbances in the brain and can result in a substantially diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life. Those with mental illnesses are usually of normal and even higher intelligence levels, although they may have difficulty performing at a normal level due to their illness.

In Maryland, approximately 325,000 Maryland residents between the ages of 15 and 54 experience some form of a depressive disorder but, according to recent statistics, fewer than half sought treatment. One in five Maryland families is affected by mental illness, according to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Across the country, approximately 57.7 million Americans experience a mental health disorder in a given year, according to Alliance’s national headquarters. And despite effective treatments, there are long delays—sometimes decades—between the first onset of symptoms and when people seek and receive treatment.

Rosalie’s secret

Rosalie Mosley began experimenting with drugs at age 9, stemming from acts of sexual abuse that started when she was just two years old. By age 17, she had begun using prescription drugs to dull the pain of her abuse.

“I was hiding a secret. I was hiding the sexual abuse. I didn’t have to feel it or think about it,” Mosley said.

Her drug use later escalated to heroin, as she attempted to suppress the memories of a verbally abusive stepfather and a mother who seemed devoid of love or compassion.

“I was like an old shoe—nobody wanted me,” said Mosley, one of six children. “I was in and out of the system. I was a knucklehead, but my home life wasn’t good.”

Four years ago, following another arrest for buying drugs, she was placed on probation but soon was re-arrested. She had already been

to jail and rehab. However, an astute public defender recognized that she would be a good candidate for Judge Cooksey's mental health court.

"I worked hard," Mosley said. "They did very well getting me the things I needed so that I could work on myself and find out what was the root of my problem and find out why I was using."

Mosley, a 43-year-old mother of five, was diagnosed with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder caused by her childhood abuse. She received intensive therapy and the proper medications.

In spite of a few setbacks, with court monitoring and treatment, it took Mosley two years to complete the mental health court program. She graduated in November 2009, and now boasts that she has been clean for almost three years and is no longer on probation.

"Judge Cooksey was my biggest fan. I was so excited that somebody saw something in me and they thought I was worth saving," Mosley said. "They knew I wanted to get my life straight and they gave me the tools."

"When I was done with the program, I felt like my whole life had turned around. I was a new person," Mosley said. "I wasn't scared. I was no longer a victim. I was a survivor."

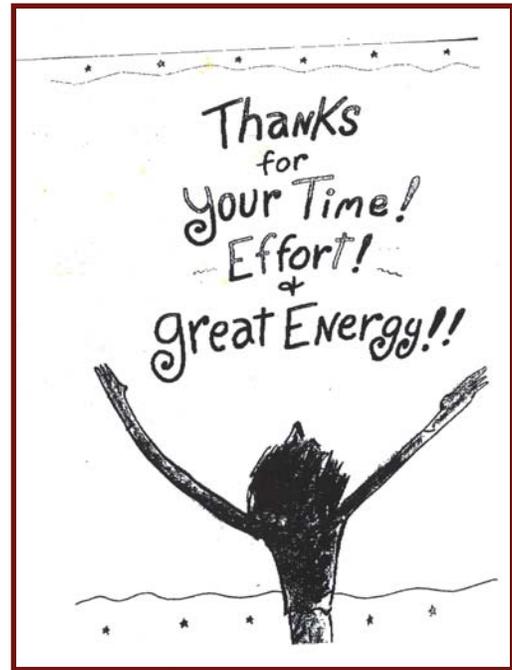
Mosley, who is mentally challenged, continues to see a therapist every week, attends Narcotics Anonymous meetings, has regular checkups to monitor her diabetes, exercises regularly and eats right.

An advocate for mental health courts, Mosley said she believes more of these courts should be instituted across the state to help others battling mental illness.

"If they had other programs like this set up, I know the crime rates would go down because it makes me more cautious to do the right thing, make the right choices," Mosley said. "But when mentally ill people continue getting locked up, you never get to the root of the problem."

More online

To read Part II of this series on mental health courts, "A day in the life of a mental health court judge," visit *Justice Matters* online on the Judiciary's website, www.mdcourts.gov.



Mental Health Court judges frequently receive thank you cards from graduates.

One in five Maryland families is affected by mental illness

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Mental Health Court is a specialized District Court docket established for defendants with mental illness. Maryland has only three such courts, but they are impacting the lives of hundreds of individuals each year.

These courts are led by retired Baltimore City District Judge Charlotte M. Cooksey, Harford County District Judge Mimi Cooper, Prince George's County District Judge Patrice E. Lewis, and Baltimore City District Judge George M. Lipman.



Judges Mimi Cooper, Patrice Lewis, and George Lipman

ALLEGANY DISTRICT COURT

*Q: How do you move a court?
A: Quickly and carefully.*

The business of the court can't stop: peace orders can't wait; domestic violence doesn't take a holiday. Then there are the piles of vital files that need to be kept in order.

Given the daunting task, it was a tribute to the court staff that it was almost 'business as usual' when the Allegany County District Court moved to new quarters last summer. There was extensive planning, packing and portaging before, during, and after the weekend move.

While it was a short move—the new District Court facilities are just next-door—the preparation was long—more than two years of planning and several months actively preparing. The new accommodations are well worth it, says Administrative Clerk Kathleen Stafford. The new District Court facilities are larger and provide crucial improvements to assure security for the public, court personnel and judges. There is a separate elevator for law enforcement officers to escort detainees, an increased number of holding rooms, including separate holding rooms for men and women, and a room equipped with bulletproof glass for District Court commissioners' meetings with detainees. Each of the two new courtrooms is as large as the largest of the old courtrooms.

Additionally, the new Clerk's Office has been consolidated to one central area, and there is a public computer for immediate access to case records. Petitioners and respondents in domestic violence issues now wait in separate areas instead of sitting face-to-face or side-by-side as they did in the old courthouse. There are rooms for attorney-client conferences, as well as offices for the state's attorney and public defenders.



**Allegany County
Administrative Judge
Edward A. Malloy**



Renovated courtroom



PHOTOS, VIDEO

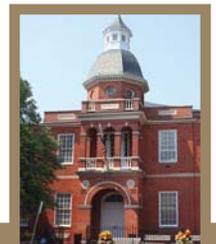
See Justice Matters online
www.mdcourts.gov

Many staff members worked evenings and weekends to make sure all the details were covered. "We were packing right up until the move," Stafford said. "It was an amazing effort by too many people to thank individually," Stafford said. "Everyone involved in this move worked together wonderfully."

More Online

For more photos of the move and the new Allegany District Court facilities, go to *Justice Matters* online on the Maryland Judiciary website, www.mdcourts.gov.

Levi retires from anne arundel



Levi, a bomb-sniffing dog retired last fall after serving at the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court for four and a half years. He searched for explosives in the courthouse's corridors, courtrooms, offices and parking garage.

MACRO ART CONTEST

art resolving conflict

Young artists from all over Maryland and their families gathered in the lobby of the Courts of Appeal building lobby in Annapolis to meet with Chief Judge Robert M. Bell when he hosted a reception for the Maryland Judiciary's fourth Conflict Resolution Day Student Bookmark Art Contest last fall. Judge Bell presented awards, shook students' hands and posed with the honorees while parents proudly snapped photos.

Almost 400 entries were received from Maryland children in kindergarten through eighth grade. The contest was sponsored by the Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO). The colorful and creative artwork reflected the theme of resolving or preventing conflict, including peer mediation, talking things out, apologizing, respecting differences, solving problems together, listening, tolerance, building peace, or alternatives to violence.



Young MACRO artists

Winning entries were chosen for first-, second-, and third-place in two categories: kindergarten-fifth grade; and sixth-eighth grade. The prize for first place in each category is \$75, second place \$50, and third place \$25. The six winning entries will be printed as bookmarks for use in promoting conflict resolution across Maryland. All the artwork was on public display for a month in the lobby of the Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal Building in Annapolis.

Calls for entries for the fifth annual contest will go out early in the next school year. Watch the Maryland Judiciary's website, www.mdcourts.gov, for more information.

More online

For more photos and the list of winners of the 2009 Conflict Resolution Day Student Bookmark Art Contest, go to *Justice Matters* online at www.mdcourts.gov.



PHOTOS, VIDEO

See Justice Matters online
www.mdcourts.gov



Alex Luster, Columbia Academy, Catonsville



Foster Joy,
Friends School,
Baltimore

Couple find themselves in court every week.

Reprinted with permission - The Gazette / Montgomery County (Oct. 27, 2009) Copyright © 2009 The Gazette. By Jason Tomassini, Gazette staff writer.

It's an unseasonably hot fall afternoon, and like many retired couples, Ed and Harriett Neufeld need something to do to pass the time.

"Do you want drug distribution or armed robbery?" Harriett, 77, asks Ed, 79, as they plan their afternoon in Rockville.

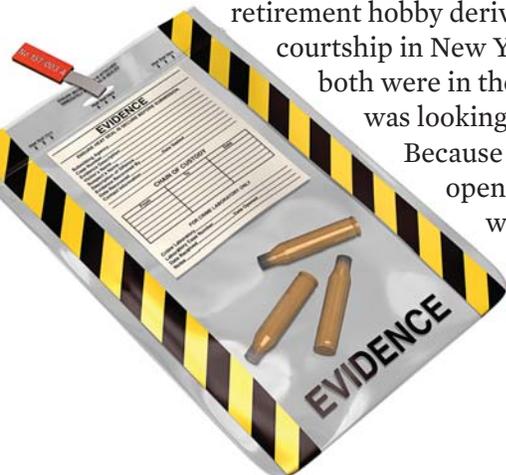
"Whatever you want, honey," Ed replies hurriedly before running back to the couple's car to drop off his jacket. His wife pores intently over the day's docket at the Montgomery County Circuit Court.

The Neufelds aren't some kind of geriatric Bonnie and Clyde deciding on their next crime. They are, as they put it, "the 13th and 14th jurors." Every week, the Neufelds leave their Leisure World retirement community in Aspen Hill for their favorite hobby: watching lawyers argue real-life court cases as defendants' lives hang in the balance.

Watching reality, not reality tv

"It's better than television, I'll tell you that much," Ed said in their apartment last week, starting their day as they usually do, working crossword puzzles over coffee before making their weekly trip to court.

For the past 14 years, since Ed retired as a civil engineer, the Neufelds have watched nearly 1,000 court cases for their own entertainment. Their post-retirement hobby derives from their courtship in New York City when both were in their 20s, and Ed was looking for a cheap date. Because courtrooms are open to the public, they would walk into night court after work and see real-life court drama.



Bringing murderers, rapists and drug dealers into a courtship was a risky move for Ed, but Harriett, an aspiring lawyer at the time, "thought it was a wonderful idea." They've been married for 55 years.

Last week, after a morning spent watching the sentencing of a murderer's accomplice and then a wealthy couple settling a messy divorce, they decide a drug-distribution case would be a nice way to spend their afternoon.

On the car-ride home after the trial broke for recess—the trial was not exciting enough for the Neufelds to stay for the outcome—Ed and Harriett held their own version of jury deliberation.

Ed took the defendant's side: From 14 feet away, the officer could not have made out that \$10 bill, he said. But Harriett believed the officer and decided to prove it from the passenger seat.

"You couldn't see this from 14 feet away?" she asks, pulling a \$20 bill from her wallet and holding it in the air.

"No! Not the brown spots!" Ed shoots back in his excitable, halting voice.

Earlier in the day, after wandering the courthouse peering into rooms to see if any proceedings looked interesting, they found a divorce case under way, although they thought it might be a criminal case. Immediately upon sitting down, Harriett starts deciphering the facts of the case.

"So far I've got a doctor and possibly some money laundering," Harriett whispers from the front row, the couple's preferred seats so they can clearly hear all of the court proceedings. "There's money that should be taxed, but he's using it for something else."

I FELT REALLY BAD FOR HIS MOTHER.

This is what America's all about.

"Someone's stealing money," Ed says bluntly, providing the abridged version of Harriett's more analytical approach.

While on the surface, it appears the Neufelds find real people's legal matters to be trivial, there are moments throughout the day that present the reality of what's going on in front of them.

One such moment is Harriett's cell phone going off while a teary-eyed mother pleaded to a judge to give her son, who drove the getaway car in a murder, a lenient sentence. Instead of hisses and dirty looks from the people around her, like she'd get in a movie theater, an armed guard rushes over to tell Harriett to turn her phone off.

But during that same testimony, Harriett's eyes well with tears as the defendant's mother breaks down when describing just how hard she worked to keep her son out of trouble.

"I felt really bad for his mother," Harriett later said.

"When you sit there, you see these people are on trial for their lives," Ed said. "Not necessarily life and death, but just the prospect of spending 10 or 15 years in prison."

"I can't imagine that," Harriett said, shuddering.

Both Ed and Harriett had an interest in law, but no formal training. Ed thought it would be a safer career choice to become a civil engineer. Harriett wanted to be a litigator but was dissuaded by family members who thought the legal world was "not a place for a woman." She ended up studying business administration.

So now they are making up for lost time. In addition to attending the court cases, the Neufelds proctor the Maryland State Bar Exam occasionally. Harriett will soon begin volunteering with juveniles going through the justice system.

For nine years, Ed volunteered with the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office as a "case screener," interviewing officers, witnesses and family members to help prosecutors prepare for trials.

"Ed carried as much of a case load as any law student," said Barbara Morales, the intern coordinator for the state's attorney's office.

After the case involving the murderer's accomplice, Ed had a brief chat with an old "boss," Assistant State's Attorney Stephen Chaikin, for whom Ed had previously screened cases. They immediately began reminiscing about old cases, like the doctor who forged his certification so he could see women in their underwear.

"Ed solved that one for me," Chaikin said as Ed laughed.

Ed is modest about his evolving knowledge of the legal system, but in between his self-deprecating humor and his gregariousness in the courthouse—everyone from security guards to high-ranking prosecutors gave Ed a hug or a handshake throughout the day—he will occasionally slip into lawyerspeak.

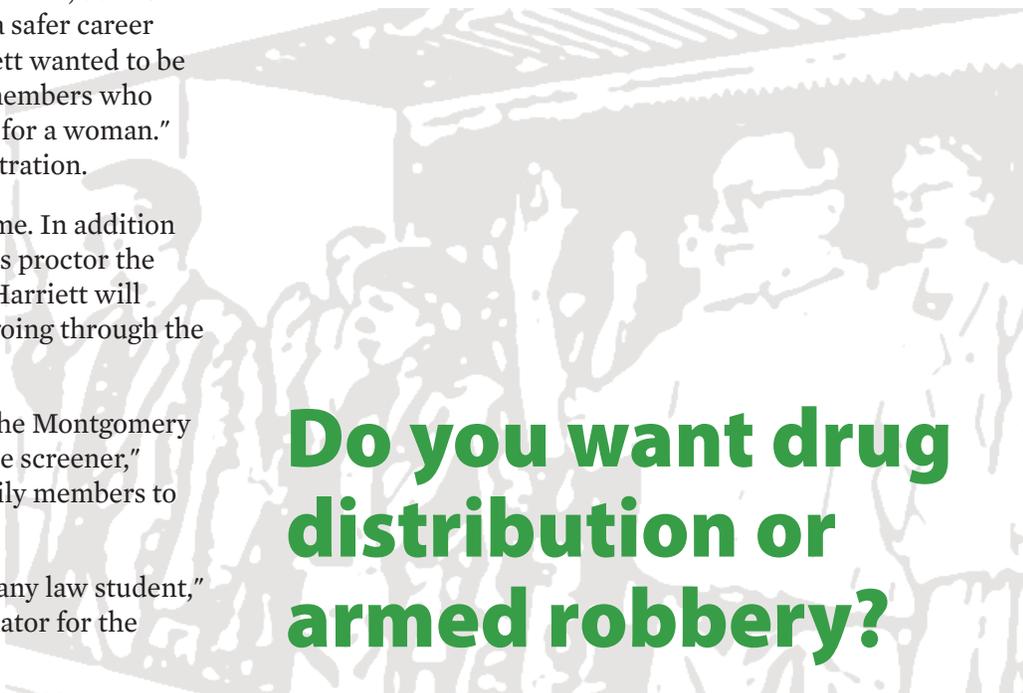
"That guy who copped a plea is in a dangerous place, because the guys he ratted on are gonna kill him," Ed noted while analyzing the case of an accused murderer's accomplice, who agreed to testify against the shooter.

Ed's enthusiasm for law shines through during his armchair analysis. Even though he often calls them "actors putting on a show," he speaks glowingly of the judges, the lawyers and the county court system.

"I love this place!" he says out of nowhere while strolling through the courthouse halls. "This is what America's all about.

"Liberty and justice for all."

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