

# COURTNEWS

San Mateo County Superior Court's Online and E-mail Newsletter  
to the San Mateo County Community

Presiding Judge Mark R. Forcum

Assistant Presiding Judge George A Miram

May 3, 2004

*Welcome to the first online  
newsletter from Judge  
Forcum and Judge Miram*

This new format will communicate changes and new programs of interest to the Community. We hope that you will find this helpful and we look forward to further developing this newsletter as a regular forum of communication with you.

As always, we welcome your input. Click on the "[webmaster](#)" link on the Court's website to send any ideas or comments.

## Inside this issue:

<i>New Online Newsletter</i>	1
<i>Community Law Night</i>	1
<i>Court in the Schools Day</i>	2
<i>Technological Advances</i>	2
<i>Jury Service</i>	3
<i>Online Self Help Center and EZLegalFile</i>	4
<i>Expansion of Bridges Day Treatment Program</i>	4
<i>Conclusion</i>	4

## New Online Newsletter

Welcome to the San Mateo County Superior Court's new online newsletter. We hope this newsletter will keep you informed about the services the court provides to the citizens of San Mateo County. May is San Mateo County Community Law Month. Please see some of the articles in this newsletter that highlight the Court's Law Month activities, including, Community Law Night and Courts in the Schools Days.

If you have any suggestions or ideas on how we can improve our service to you, please click on the [webmaster](#) link on the Court's website.

## Community Law Night

Many persons in our community need information about a legal problem they may have. To address this need, on Thursday, **May 6, 2004** the San Mateo County Superior Court, San Mateo County Bar Association and San Mateo County will hold its second annual Community Law Night. This free event will assist and educate San Mateo County residents with their legal issues by providing free informational lectures, one-on-one attorney consultations and information about available community resources.

This year's event will be held at the Hall of Justice in Redwood City, 400 County Center from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. There will be free childcare and Spanish language interpreters available, both at the mini-consultations and at the lectures.

The second Community Law Night event follows last year's successful event where more than 40 volunteer attorneys provided mini-consultations to the public, representatives from 23 government agencies and non-profit organizations provided information about their services, and seminars on Small Claims, Divorce, Criminal/DUI, Evictions, Employment, and the Legal System were held.



At last year's event,  
more than 150 people  
received help with  
their legal issue

Our thanks to this year's Community Law Night Committee members: John Blackman, Nadine Burg, David Cherniss, John Digiacinto, Don Franchi, Jennifer Keith, Vivian Kral, Bill Lowell, Lonny Pini, Monica Rands-Preuss, Bill Rapoport, Vicki Robinson, Jill Selvaggio, Peggy Thompson, Rand White, and Lauren Zorfias for all of their planning efforts.

# Court in the Schools Day



Our unique and innovative Court in the Schools Day teaches high school students about the court system. Last year, five of our judges, Judges Miram, Forcum, Foiles, Runde and Weiner, went to Capuchino, Mills, Burlingame, Aragon and Hillsdale High Schools to teach government classes using a case study based on a real San Mateo County criminal case. The case study can be found on the Court’s website by clicking the “High Schools Case Study” link.

The program was a resounding success, gaining praise from students and teachers alike. This year we have expanded the program by having students from Burlingame High

School come to the Court to see court cases and hear presentations from Judges Forcum, Miram and Foiles.

We are happy to announce that our second Court in the Schools day will be on **May 20, 2004** in each of the six San Mateo Union High School campuses . We are also pleased to report that the program will be expanded this year to the four schools in the Sequoia Union High School District, Carlmont, Sequoia, Woodside and Menlo-Atherton High Schools. The Court in the Schools program will take place on **May 26 and 27, 2004** for those schools.

If you are a teacher, parent, or student and would like to have a judge come to your school, or wish to have a group of students observe our Court, please contact Presiding Judge Mark R. Forcum by clicking on the Court’s [webmaster](#) link on the Court’s website or by phoning his courtroom at 650-363-7835.

# Technological Advances

As part of our outreach program with San Mateo County lawyers, we determined that members of the public and attorneys have an appropriate and ongoing need to access court case information over the Internet. To enable online access to case files, we consulted with our existing case management system vendor and, with the help of Court Executive Officer Peggy Thompson and the Court’s Director of Information Technology Tim Benton, we have implemented “Open Access” which provides a register of actions in Civil, Probate, Small Claims and Family Law cases. LPS and Conservatorship cases are not included given the confidential nature of these proceedings.

Open Access allows you to obtain a historical record about a case over the Internet. This information is helpful on many levels, for example, if you are a new party to a case and you need to know what has already occurred. Making this information available online, saves considerable time in learning what has occurred in this case and eliminates the need to come to the courthouse and wait for a file.

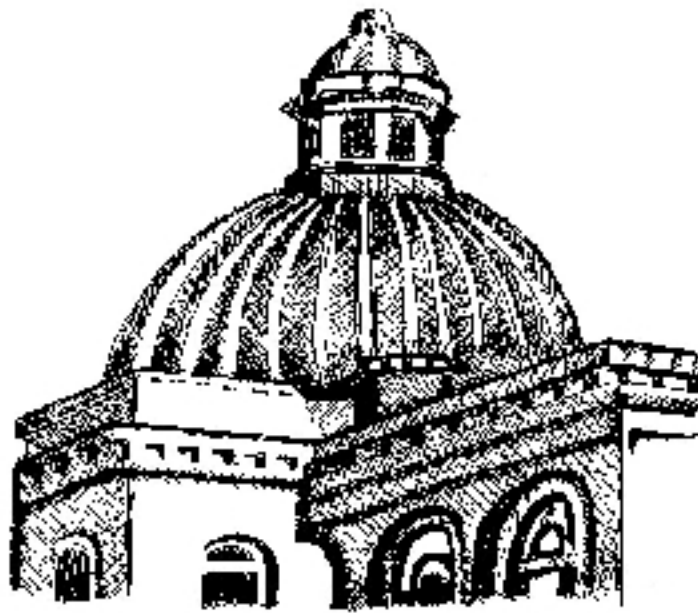
We designed this system to be user-friendly. You can use the system with a party name or case number to trigger the relevant information. Visit the Court’s website and click on the “[Access Court Files on the Internet](#)” link to get started. As always, we welcome your feedback about this service through the Court’s [webmaster](#).



# Jury Service

One of the chief goals of our administration when we started in January 2003, was to implement a more user friendly system for jurors. To this end, we have implemented the following:

- Jurors can request a continuance of up to six months and pick the specific month and day that they are able to serve.
- Wireless Internet access is available in the jury assembly room. Jurors can bring their laptops and access the Internet and their e-mail while they wait to report to a courtroom.
- Computers in the jury assembly room allow jurors access to the Internet while they are waiting.
- The Presiding Judge or Assistant Presiding Judge meets daily with the Court's jury staff to reduce the number of jurors brought to the courthouse. This improved communication has resulted in a reduction of jurors summoned to the courthouse by approximately 30% from 2002.
- Improved air conditioning and ventilation in the jury assembly rooms.



Our goal is to be respectful of your time and understanding of your many other commitments. Our jury program has been well received by the public, due in large part to our excellent staff and the constructive comments that our jurors provide in our customer comment cards. Here is a sample of some comments that recent jurors have given:

- "Thank you for the internet service (in the jury room)...wireless is great!"
- "I love the new facilities, they really help make this a pleasure"
- "Thank you for handling this process in a professional and courteous manner"
- "I was really impressed that the Assistant Presiding Judge thanked us for our service"

As always, we welcome your comments. If you have any ideas as to how we can improve our service to you, please visit our [website](#) and click the [webmaster](#) link to email the court.

**May 10-14 is Juror Appreciation Week.  
Thank you for your help and your  
tremendous community service!**

[www.sanmateocourt.org](http://www.sanmateocourt.org)



# Online Self Help Center and EZLegalFile

If you ever need help with Family Law, Small Claims, Landlord/Tenant or Guardianships, click here to access the Court's Online Self Help Center, which will take you to EZLegalFile. EZLegalFile is a user friendly and helpful way of completing court forms online. The program asks direct questions and, based on those responses, completes the appropriate court forms that you can mail or take to the courthouse to file.



EZLegalFile is a recipient of the prestigious Kleps Award for innovation in technology

Another web-based program that San Mateo County Superior Court has developed to improve services is the online traffic system, where you can pay your traffic ticket, sign up for traffic school, or request a 30-day extension all online. This program eliminates the need to come to the Court for many traffic matters. More than 50 people a day use the online traffic system, a testimony to its convenience and ease of use.

We invite you to click on the [Online Help Center](#) link on the Court's website for these and other services.

# Expansion of Bridges Day Treatment



The Bridges Day Treatment Program, an intensive drug and alcohol treatment program, has been expanded to provide treatment for defendants with drug and alcohol addiction and related mental illnesses. According to community corrections expert, Professor Edward Latessa, "the Bridges program is one of the finest day treatment programs in the country." This expansion of a model program will meet a significant need within our community. Bridges, a program developed by the Court, has a success rate of about seventy percent, which is excellent for an addicted population in a substance abuse treatment program.

For more information about the Bridges Program, please visit the [Bridges](#) section on the Court's website.

# Conclusion

The chief goal of our administration is to make the Court system user friendly, while at the same time reducing costs to you, the taxpayer. Our many internet programs accomplish these goals as we can deliver services to you at a time when it is convenient to you, while saving on staffing costs. This is particularly important given the significant budget cuts that we have been mandated with over the last few years. Through the expanded use of technology, we have avoided the need to close court facilities or reduce our hours of service.

We sincerely thank all of you for helping us achieve our goals. As always, we welcome your constructive input and suggestions. Please click on the [webmaster](#) link on the Court's website and let us know what you think. Thank you.

Hon. Mark R. Forcum  
Presiding Judge

Hon. George A. Miram  
Assistant Presiding Judge