

Court News

An Online Newsletter for the San Mateo County Bar Association

Hon. Mark R. Forcum
Presiding Judge

Hon. George A. Miram
Assistant Presiding Judge

October 13, 2004

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“Every attorney I know is very pleased to have the attorney window in the family law clerk’s office. It saves a tremendous amount of time. Moreover, the copier in the clerk’s office provides a great service to attorneys and litigants alike—it saves time and a great deal of frustration for self-represented litigants!”

- Vivian L. Kral, Esq.

E-DELIVERY IS HERE

Our Court created the extremely innovative EZLegalFile program, which allows you to fill out court forms online. This user-friendly system simplifies and makes easier the filing of forms in the areas of Family Law, Small Claims, Housing, and Guardianships. This year, the California Administrative Office of the Courts recognized EZLegalFile for excellence in innovation. Our administration, consistent with its goal of making the court system more user friendly and economical has now implemented e-delivery to allow for the electronic submission of court forms and payment of filing fees. Once e-delivered, court forms are filed and an endorsed filed copy is returned to the user. This enhancement has been successfully used in small claims and unlawful detainer filings in San Mateo.



By the end of the year, we hope to have a similar e-delivery system for family law, guardianships and general civil cases. E-delivery is a tremendous advancement. It removes the need to come to the courthouse to file your papers, which, in turn, cuts down on the expense and time wasted driving, parking and waiting in line. E-delivery also helps everyone as it helps save valuable taxpayer dollars by increasing efficiency in court operations.

Our administration would like to sincerely thank our excellent Court CEO Peggy Thompson, Internet Technology Director Tim Benton, Deputy Court Executive Officer Bill Lowell and Outreach Coordinator Jill Selvaggio for all of their help with this project.

FAMILY LAW CLERK’S OFFICE RE-DESIGN

The Family Law Clerk’s Office in the Hall of Justice has been remodeled to include an attorney express window and photo-copying machine. This redesign has been a goal of this administration and we are very happy to see it occur. We have received much positive feedback from the Bar about the express window and we thank the Family Law Bar for their patience while we put this redesign together.

The Family Law Clerk’s Office is also home to the Court’s newest Self-Help Center. With library-style resource areas and two computers, visitors can access court files via Open Access, complete their forms using EZLegalFile or research their case using the internet and informational brochures and handouts.

FURTHER CALENDAR CHANGES

I. Commissioner assignments

We now have five judicial vacancies on our court. Our commissioner selection committee, made up of Assistant Presiding Judge George A. Miram, Supervising Judge Robert D. Foiles and Commissioner Susan Greenberg acted expeditiously, screening over 140 applicants. The process led to the judges voting to hire three outstanding new judicial officers, Commissioners Joe Allen and Richard Kelly and Referee Stephanie Garratt. As Judge Miram noted when these appointments were made, the three are “well respected attorneys who... would treat litigants with fairness, patience and respect.”



Commissioner Kelly is assigned to the Redwood City branch to hear unlawful detainer, traffic, and small claims matters. Commissioner Allen is assigned to the South San Francisco Branch to hear traffic and small claims cases and a criminal arraignment calendar on Friday mornings. Referee Garrett is assigned to the San Mateo branch to hear traffic and small claims matters.

Commissioner Susan Greenberg will be sitting in Redwood City and assigned a variety of calendars, including criminal arraignments, pretrials, family law support, and traffic and small claims. Commissioner Greenberg will also be assuming responsibility for hearing drug court calendars in Redwood City on an interim basis.

II. New Courtroom Locations

Given recent retirements and the hiring of the new commissioners and referee, a number of judicial officers have moved. The chart below should help you find the judge or commissioners you are looking for:

Effective Date	Judicial Officer	Location	Phone Number
10/4	Commissioner Richard Kelly	Redwood City Annex D	650-599-1632
10/4	Commissioner Joe Allen	South San Francisco Courtroom M	650-877-5456
10/4	Referee Stephanie Garrett	San Mateo Courtroom G	650-573-2619
10/4	Judge Craig L. Parsons	Redwood City Courtroom 2K	650-363-4802
10/12	Judge Steven Dylina	Redwood City Courtroom 8C	650-599-1669
10/25	Commissioner Susan Greenberg	Redwood City Courtroom 4C	650-363-4807
12/1	Judge Carl W. Holm	Redwood City Courtroom 2J	650-599-1528

SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES

As you know, we are rotating settlement conferences to a variety of judges. To help you know where to go, settlement conferences will be assigned to the following judges in October, November, and December 2004.

Week of	Judge	Dept	Courtroom
10/4	Judge Quentin L. Kopp	6	2G
10/11	Judge Quentin L. Kopp	6	2G
10/18	Judge Craig L. Parsons	9	2K
10/25	Judge George A. Miram	28	2F
11/1	Judge George A. Miram	28	2F
11/8	Judge Barbara J. Mallach	22	4B
11/15	Judge John Schwartz	18	8D
11/22	Judge John W. Runde	15	2D
11/29	Judge Robert D. Foiles	21	2E
12/6	Judge Robert D. Foiles	21	2E
12/13	Judge Steven L. Dylina	7	8C



These assignments are subject to change. Please feel free to contact Judge Forcum's department at 650-363-7835 to find out where your settlement conference is assigned.

MOCK TRIAL—VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

San Mateo County's 2005 High School Mock Trial Competition is scheduled for January and February 2005. This program is a very important event for the students involved as they learn valuable skills in preparing for and executing their roles. Judges and attorney scorers are needed for competitions which will be held in the Redwood City and South San Francisco courthouses.

Once again, the Court, in coordination with the Bar and Karen Gotelli, will participate in this worthwhile event. We'd like to express our appreciation to Karen for her continuing efforts at making this program work so successfully. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Karen Gotelli, Mock Trial Scheduler, at 650-802-3115 or via email at karen.gotelli@weil.com.

The San Mateo County Bar has always done an outstanding job in stepping up to the plate to help these outstanding students.

- Hon. Mark R. Forcum, Presiding Judge

NORTHERN BRANCH

The Northern Branch has been particularly hard hit by recent vacancies. We thank Judge Dylina for sitting in Northern since mid-July. Effective October 11, 2004, we will be covering Northern's vacancies with an assigned judge from the AOC and Redwood City judges who will rotate weekly to Northern. The schedule of rotating judges and their location is as follows:

Date	Judicial Officer	Courtroom	Phone
10/11	Visiting Judge Commissioner Susan Greenberg	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
10/18	Visiting Judge Commissioner Susan Greenberg	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
10/25	Visiting Judge Judge Thomas McGinn Smith	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
11/1	Visiting Judge Judge Barbara J. Mallach	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
11/8	Visiting Judge Judge John G. Schwartz	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
11/15	Visiting Judge Judge John W. Runde	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
11/22	Visiting Judge Judge Craig L. Parsons	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
11/29	Visiting Judge Judge Craig L. Parsons	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
12/6	Visiting Judge Judge Joseph E. Bergeron	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440
12/13	Visiting Judge Judge Quentin L. Kopp	Courtroom L Courtroom J	650-877-5769 650-877-5440

COMPLEX CIVIL LITIGATION

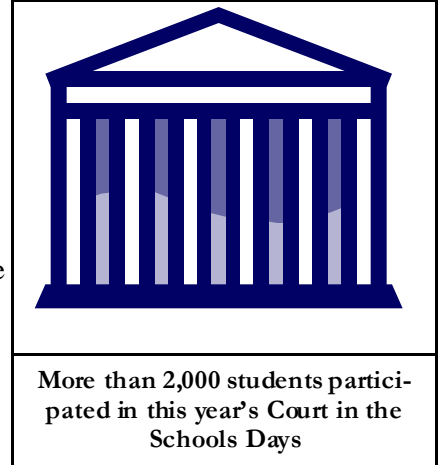
We have established a Bench-Bar Committee to review our policies, procedures and rules for the handling of complex civil cases. The committee is chaired by Judge Carol Mittlesteadt, who has done an exemplary job over the years in handling many complex civil cases. We are extremely appreciative that Bruce Simon, Dario deGhetaldi, Randy Hicks and Gerry Buchwald have agreed to serve on this committee. Each of these outstanding lawyers have handled numerous complex civil cases and each has a perspective as to how we can improve our approach. If you have any suggestions or ideas about how we can improve the manner with which we handle these cases, please contact either one of us, any member of the complex civil litigation committee, or click on the webmaster link on the Court's homepage.

COURT IN THE SCHOOLS DAYS

The second annual Court in the Schools Day event this spring was a tremendous success. The program was initiated within the San Mateo Union High School District and was expanded this year to include the Sequoia Union High School District. The program centers on a criminal case and raises issues pertaining to sentencing, victim impact issues and evidentiary questions. The case study we use can be found on the Court's website.

The Court in the Schools Day program was recently commended by the Judicial Council in its annual 2004 Report as an excellent example of court outreach. The program is also well-received by the students and faculty of the participating schools.

This year, the program is being expanded and will be held twice over the school year, thereby providing the opportunity for more students to benefit from this interactive, facilitative instruction. Serra High School will also be participating and the Court is looking to expand the program to northern peninsula schools.



The following are the members of the San Mateo Superior Court judiciary and the high schools they visited in May 2003

Judge Bergeron	Sequoia
Judge Diaz	San Mateo
Judge Foiles	Aragon
Judge Forcum	Burlingame, Carlmont, Menlo-Atherton, San Mateo Middle College High School and Sequoia
Judge Freeman	Menlo-Atherton
Judge Holm	Sequoia
Judge Miram	Woodside
Judge Runde	Mills
Judge Weiner	Capuchino
Commissioner Greenberg	Peninsula

“The case study was excellent, exciting for the students and ripe with specific examples onto which they could grab. The judge was also terrific. I loved the visit and so did the students.”

- Derek DeNardo, teacher, Sequoia High School

COMMENDATION FOR THE PRIVATE DEFENDER PROGRAM

Presiding Judge Forcum recently sent the following letter to the Honorable Mark Church, President of the Board of Supervisors commending the Private Defender Program for their outstanding work. We thought all members of the Bar Association should know how much we, as a Court, value the efforts of each and every member of the Private Defender Panel and its outstanding administrators, John Digiacinto and Charles Robinson.

Dear Mark:

As you know, our County is extremely fortunate to have a Private Defender Program to represent indigent criminal defendants and others in need of legal representation. The men and women that make up the Private Defender Program consistently represent the highest level of lawyering. The success of this program starts at the top, with two exemplary administrators — John Digiacinto and Charles Robinson. Mr. Digiacinto and Mr. Robinson have made a difference by insuring the program works with the County and Court in creative ways to help solve problems and address new challenges. John Digiacinto's active participation in the recently created Jail Overcrowding Task Force and numerous Proposition 36 committees is emblematic of his positive interest in looking for collaborative solutions to problems. Mr. Digiacinto and Mr. Robinson have also actively supported the Court's highly successful Bridges drug and alcohol treatment program, including its recent expansion to include dual diagnosis defendants.

One of Mr. Digiacinto and Mr. Robinson's greatest strengths is continually finding the best lawyer for a specific type of case. These administrators exercise great care in insuring that only the most skilled and competent lawyers represent those charged with homicides and serious felonies. The same administrative care is utilized in selecting panel attorneys who play a very different role in representing defendants in our treatment courts — Bridges, Proposition 36 and Drug Court.

Given recent retirements from the panel, Mr. Digiacinto and Mr. Robinson have done an outstanding job in recruiting a number of young lawyers, who have demonstrated they have the skills and commitment to be highly successful advocates.

The individual panel members of the Private Defender Program continue to represent the best in the legal profession. Every day the many lawyers that make up the panel conscientiously represent criminal defendants charged with crimes as diverse as homicide and petty theft. The attorneys who work in Bridges and treatment court care deeply about their clients and strive to support them through the difficult process of remaining drug and alcohol free.

One of the most important parts of the program is the work that panel members do in handling LPS cases. The panel lawyers assigned to LPS cases work to protect the civil rights of clients with mental problems. I have been continually impressed with the great skill, sensitivity and patience of these lawyers.

The past year has been very successful for the Private Defender panel with many positive results after trial or through negotiated disposition. I know I speak for all of the Judges in saying we have respect and admiration for the outstanding efforts of each Private Defender panel member. Thank you for considering my views.

Very truly yours,
Mark R. Forcum, Presiding Judge

THANK YOU

We are very happy with the innovations our court has undertaken to improve our service to you and the public. The new e-delivery system represents the best possible level of service by making it more cost effective for you to represent your clients, while at the same time saving valuable taxpayer dollars. Our use of different services, ranging from CourtCall to our Internet-based Open Access system for case information, ultimately provides you and the public with an appropriately high level of service. A number of the ideas for these innovative programs came about from the many lunch meetings that we had with all of you. Your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions have been a tremendous help in shaping a number of positive changes. Indeed, this newsletter is an outgrowth of our meetings with you, as regular communication is very important. As our administration will soon change, we want to take this time to sincerely thank you for your input, constructive suggestions, and support during the last two years.

Thank you,

Hon. Mark R. Forcum
Presiding Judge

Hon George A. Miram
Assistant Presiding Judge



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