

Citizens Alliance for the Oakland County Probate and Circuit Courts

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There is a group of people in Oakland County that you might not have heard much about, but they have worked steadily over the years to help improve the ability of Oakland County citizens to access our courts. That group of people is the Citizens Alliance for the Oakland County Probate and Circuit Courts.

The Citizens Alliance was formed in 1991 with the purpose of assisting the courts in the fulfillment of their mission. This is achieved through such efforts as increasing communication between the courts and the citizens of the county, assisting the courts in developing community-based programs, and recommending solutions to the courts regarding identified issues.

The Citizens Alliance is made up of volunteers representing a diverse experience base. Members include social workers, medical personnel, attorneys, court personnel, involved citizens, and individuals from community support organizations.

One of the longest-running programs sponsored by the Citizens Alliance is the "Removing the Mysteries of Probate Court" informational seminar. The seminar is offered free to groups and is usually taught by Probate Register Jill Koney Daly, a private attorney, and a bank trust officer. The focus of the seminar is to assist attendees in understanding such issues as why trying to "avoid probate" can cause difficulties during a person's lifetime, and the variety of purposes served by different types of estate planning documents. Attendees are also given information on topics such as guardianships, conservatorships, and estate administration.

Three newer initiatives have also been sponsored by the Citizens Alliance and the necessary materials were created

by Citizens Alliance members. The "Basic Training for Conservators" class is held on the first Wednesday of each month and is designed to supply conservators with the information they need to fulfill their fiduciary obligations. The attendees also have the opportunity to ask questions of the volunteer attorney who teaches the training.

In addition, newly appointed conservators are now given a folder of information at the time of their appointment. The folder contains sample forms, instructions and tips on acting as a conservator. It also provides the conservator with a place to keep track of important information regarding due dates, accounts, and other items necessary to their duties.

The newest educational initiative is the "Guardianship Basic Training" class. Like the conservator training, this class is intended to provide the essential information necessary to fulfilling the requirements of the appointment. The volunteer Public Administrator who leads the class also provides information on community support services that are available to assist the guardian.

Another Citizens Alliance initiative is also coming to fruition at the courthouse. An information kiosk will now be available at each of the public entrances. At their introductory stage, they will be providing information such as directions to common areas of the courthouse, the location of courtrooms, hours of operation, and other general information designed to assist in accessing court services.

On behalf of the Probate and Circuit courts, I'd like to thank the members of the Citizens Alliance for their continued efforts toward assisting us in serving our constituents. For additional information on Citizens Alliance, please feel free to contact me at 248-858-5603.