

Moving Forward

by *Rebecca A. Schnelz*
Probate Court Administrator

If you noticed the new picture at the top of this page, then you'll see that some changes have occurred in the administration of our Probate Court in the last two months. Lisa Langton, who has done a simply outstanding job as our Probate Register since 1998, has been appointed Deputy Court Administrator for the Circuit Court. (Congratulations, Lisa!) We will certainly miss Lisa's presence in Probate. In their continuing effort to improve the operation of the Probate Court, the judges have decided to create a new position, that of Probate Court Administrator. I was selected for that position. Jill Koney Daly, who has done an excellent job as Chief of Probate Estates & Mental Health Services, has been appointed as the new Probate Register.

On a personal note, for the past six years I have had the privilege of serving as Judge Eugene Arthur Moore's judicial staff attorney. I consider it a bonus that my new job allows me to continue to work with him. That, of course, is on top of the new opportunity to work closely with and learn from Chief Judge Barry Grant, Chief Judge Pro Tem Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti and Presiding Judge of the Estates Division Judge Linda Hallmark, as well as Judge Moore. When you include the outstanding probate staff as well as the many excellent Oakland County probate practitioners in the mix, it is easy to understand why I am looking forward to the many challenges of my new position.

In the next few months, we will be making some changes in our workflow at the Probate Court. For the most part these changes will be internal, but you may see some different faces handling your filings. In the end, our goal is always to continually improve and provide the best services to our public.

People outside the court system whom I've spoken with are often surprised to hear that the Probate Court does more than handle wills. Of course, probate includes much more, with guardianships, conservatorships, mental health commitments, and the variety of other case types we handle. Our Probate Court is here to serve people regarding issues that are often life-changing, if not catastrophic. Most important, it is our goal to ensure that no matter what services the public needs, we are prepared to provide the most efficient, accurate and compassionate service possible.

If you're at the Probate Court, I hope you'll take the opportunity to stop in and say hello. (My office is currently located in the Estates and Mental Health area, near the main counter.) A key to our continued success in providing quality service to the public includes improving services to our practitioners as well. I look forward to working with the bar in achieving that goal.

2006 Employee of the Year

A very enjoyable part of my new job is the opportunity to introduce you to **Patrina Anthony**, the Oakland County Probate Court's **2006 Employee of**

the Year. She is currently a member of our Mental Health unit, but has worked in a variety of areas within our court. Patrina started at the Probate Court in 1999 as a typist and has been consistently promoted since that time, most recently being promoted to Deputy Probate Register II last October. A co-worker who nominated Patrina for the award explained, "You have to have a skill to listen to the public, know what you're listening for and what to do with the information received. Patrina has that skill." I believe all of her co-workers would agree. In a department where the people we serve are often distraught and timing is absolutely critical, Patrina manages to balance efficient service with a true concern for the well-being of those we serve.

Her connection with other people and her desire to help is what Patrina says makes her job satisfying. She loves to work hard, and started out working with her father in the family restaurant business for 12 years. Patrina told me that knowing she has an important job at the Probate Court and having the ability to help individuals gives her a sense of peace.

Patrina doesn't give herself much time to relax though. While working full time for the Probate Court, she is also attending Baker College of Auburn Hills working toward a Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management (and maintaining a 3.46 GPA!) This is in addition to working a part-time job, caring for her family, doing fundraising for United Way and March of Dimes, and a multitude of other projects.

The importance of her family to Patrina was made clear at the annual employee recognition ceremony for the county. Celebrating with Patrina that day were her husband, Derek; her two daughters, Dajasa and Paige; her father; twin sister; grandmother-in-law; two sisters-in-law; uncle and aunt; cousin; niece; and two nephews. It was obvious to see where Patrina obtained her concern for others, and a chance to see the wonderful support she receives from her family.

The opportunity to work with people such as Patrina is one of the reasons I know I am going to enjoy my new position. Congratulations, Patrina!

