

# Congratulations

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I am writing this column as we close out 2009 and head into 2010. While looking ahead at the new year and making the requisite plans, it seemed a good time to update everyone on a range of items.

## *New Chief Judge*

First, I would like to congratulate Judge Eugene Arthur Moore on his appointment as chief judge of the Oakland County Probate Court. Judge Moore has been chief judge before (three times), and has dealt with many changes and challenges during his 40-year-plus tenure on the bench.

As some of you may know, I was Judge Moore's judicial staff attorney for six years. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to work directly with him again and benefit from his experience as we face new challenges in the coming year.

Judge Moore has appointed Judge Linda Hallmark as the chief judge pro tem of the Probate Court, and Judge Daniel A. O'Brien as presiding judge of the Estates Division.

## *Employee of the Year*

I also wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Probate Court's Employee of the Year, **Christopher Cook**. His work duties frequently place him at the service counter, so many of you know Chris by sight, if not by name.

Chris joined the court in 1997 as a clerk and worked his way through a variety of positions to his current assignment as a deputy probate register II. In nominating him for Employee of the Year, one of Chris' co-workers commented that he "takes great pride in his position." Anyone who speaks with Chris about his job would have to agree that he appreciates the gravity of the work he performs and respects the system of which he is a part. Congratulations, Employee of the Year Christopher Cook!

## *New Initiatives*

Starting in January 2010, the Oakland County Probate Court began a pilot project to hear mental health commitment petitions involving patients at the Center for Foren-

sic Psychiatry through the use of the county's OakVideo technology. The videoconferencing technology allows the patient and their defense counsel to be present in the courtroom at the facility, while the judge and the assistant prosecutor are in the Oakland County courtroom.

We are excited about the advantages we expect this pilot program to demonstrate. It is anticipated that the new program will benefit the patients by reducing the disruption associated with being transported to Oakland County for their hearing. In addition, it will relieve the Oakland County Sheriff's Department of having to make the associated transport trips.

## *Judge Docket Switch*

As you have seen announced elsewhere, Circuit Judge Lisa Gorcyca has assumed the Family Division docket previously assigned to Judge Martha Anderson. Please note that all ancillary probate cases that were assigned to Judge Anderson have been reassigned to Judge Gorcyca. Any questions regarding the current status of any case should be addressed to the chambers of the currently assigned judge.

## *Michigan Trust Code*

Just another quick reminder that the Michigan Trust Code goes into effect on April 1, 2010. Proposed changes to the Michigan Court Rules necessitated by the Trust Code are currently posted for comment on the Michigan Supreme Court's Web site at <http://courts.michigan.gov/index.htm>.

## *Forms*

Please remember that the Probate Court requires court forms to be utilized where one exists for a particular filing. We cannot accept outdated forms in most situations. A number of forms were recently updated by SCAO and a new form was developed to appoint a successor PR informally (PC 620). Please check the court's Web site at [www.oakgov.com/probate](http://www.oakgov.com/probate) for current forms. Forms are also available through the SCAO Web site at [courts.michigan.gov/scao/courtforms/index.htm](http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/courtforms/index.htm).