

Going Forward

by *Rebecca A. Schnelz*
Probate Court Administrator



This year, January brings not only a new calendar year, but a number of other changes as well.

For the Oakland County Probate Court, our biggest change will be that we are welcoming a new probate judge following Judge Barry Grant's retirement. As of January 1, 2009, Judge Daniel A. O'Brien began his term as an Oakland County Probate Court judge.

Judge O'Brien has spent the last several years in private practice at O'Brien Legal Services. His practice involved general matters and litigation, including criminal law, commercial law, wills, probate, divorce, real estate and personal injury. In 2001, Judge O'Brien was appointed as a judicial magistrate for the 52-2 District Court, where he served through 2008. From 1995-1999, Judge O'Brien practiced with Raftery & Associates. He was an Oakland County assistant prosecutor from 1991-1995, a litigation attorney with Garan Luow Miller during 1990-1991, and worked as a research attorney and a judicial clerk for the Hon. Myron H. Wahls in the Michigan Court of Appeals from 1988-1990.

In speaking with Judge O'Brien, he has stressed to me that he has looked forward to beginning his term on the bench and to working with staff at the court to make a smooth transition. We look forward to working with him as well.

Judge O'Brien will be assigned Judge Barry Grant's docket. This means that all cases previously assigned to Judge Grant will now be assigned to Judge O'Brien.

The new year has also brought some changes in courtroom assignments. Chief Probate Judge Elizabeth Pezzetti will now be sitting in courtroom 1F, previously Judge

Barry Grant's courtroom. Judge Daniel A. O'Brien will be sitting in courtroom 1D. You may still reach Judge Pezzetti's chambers at the same phone number: 858-0240. Judge O'Brien's chambers may be reached at 858-0287.

During 2009, you may see some additional developments at the Probate Court. Work has begun to introduce e-filing into the court for certain types of cases. I'll be updating you on that in future columns. Continued budget concerns will also be a focus for our court in the coming months as we review our business processes to meet budget goals.

Volunteers

The Probate Court is always looking for volunteers to assist with required guardianship reviews. These volunteers meet with the ward and the guardian and provide a report to the court on the welfare of the ward. Training is provided. If you know someone who may be interested in assisting the court with this task, please have them contact me at 248-858-5603.

Probate and Estate and Trusts Committee Meetings

Don't forget that the Oakland County Bar Association has a Probate, Estates and Trusts Committee that meets monthly. The meetings are an excellent way to meet other practitioners, receive updates on current topics in the area of Probate, and have the opportunity to share concerns. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Kristen Bennett at (248) 334-3400 or kbennett@ocba.org.

On behalf of the Oakland County Probate Court, I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. We look forward to working with you in 2009.

*If you are interested in joining the
OCBA Lawyer Referral Service,
call Cathy Willhite at (248) 334-3400*