

District/Municipal Court Newsletter

The committee would like to welcome Jami Stavlo, from the Center for Dialog and Resolution as our newest member. She is the new Mediation Services Coordinator for the Center.

Kimberly Cox, City Attorney for Lakewood, gave the committee an update on a few of their programs. The Officer phlebotomy program is in full swing. This program allows Lakewood Police Officers to draw blood pursuant to a search warrant. Lakewood has their own blood draw facility, it is adjacent to their breathalyzer room. The Lakewood Officers are trained in accordance with the Department of Health guidelines and are re-certified yearly. Many other jurisdictions have started their own program of Officer blood draws, City of Tacoma, Pierce County Sheriff, City of Seattle and the Washington State Patrol all of which have a program in place or are seriously considering starting a program wherein their Officers/Deputies are performing blood draws pursuant to a warrant. Most if not all of these jurisdictions are looking to the Lakewood program as a model. Lakewood has been happy to partner with other jurisdictions in developing and implementing the Officer phlebotomy program. Lakewood does require that the partnering agency adopt the entire program and not just cherry pick the portions of their program that they want to implement.

Another new development in the City of Lakewood has been an ordinance on the books for approximately one year now wherein cases involving children who are exposed to Domestic Violence are subject to an enhancement of the penalties associated with that crime. Similar ordinances have been enacted in the City of Federal Way and Tacoma. Ms. Cox was very candid about the fact that the ordinance was an effective bargaining chip for DV cases, and she was hopeful that it could help resolve cases and thus enabling the Court to gain jurisdiction over a defendant and required them to seek evaluations and treatment.

Lakewood has also had imbedded Mental Health providers assisting Officers on-duty for many months now. The program has been a huge success. The City of Tacoma and more recently the Pierce County Sheriff have also been utilizing Mental Health providers who travel with and assist on-duty officers as well. All information indicates that these jurisdictions are experiencing great success with the program.

Misty Robison, Pierce County District Court Administrator, gave the committee an update on the construction affecting the Court. The design phase has been completed in regards to the 925 Tacoma Ave building and the 5th Floor courtrooms in the County-City Building. The Hess building on the corner of 9th and Tacoma Avenue is scheduled for demolition. The District Court Resource Center, the Day Reporting and Work Crew programs will be housed in the 905 building. Construction is slated to start around August/September with occupancy by November/December of this year. Construction

is slated to start on the new 5th Floor courtrooms and they should be ready for occupancy in March/April of 2020.

The Pierce County District Court has two therapeutic courts. The DART program and Veterans' Court. The DART program recently had a graduation ceremony. It was well attended by the family and friends of the graduating class, as well as other judges and county officials. Judge Claire Sussman is the Judge who presides over the DART docket. She made presentations to all the graduates. Recently retired Judge Margaret Ross was also in attendance. Judge Ross was the Judge who presided over the DART program in its inception. Judge Ross was the Judge when all these graduates started the DART program. The ceremony was filled with stories of overcoming tremendous hurdles created by substance abuse. The stories were heartfelt and inspiring. The graduation ceremony was a chance for the public at-large to understand the tremendous impact that the DART program has on the lives of the participants, their friends and loved ones.

The Veterans Court is fairly new, and so far, it has 5 participants with 5 more veterans slated to join soon. This committee will hopefully forward more information regarding this court in the near future.

The committee welcomed the newly installed Judges, Karl Williams and Lizanne Padula, from the Pierce County District Court and Judge Dwayne Christopher from the Tacoma Municipal Court.

The Center for Dialog and Resolution is hosting their Art Walk and Open House on April 18, 2019. The Open House will feature mock mediations with a Fairy Tale theme. Later this year the Center will be hosting their 25th Anniversary Gala. Please mark your calendars for October 18, 2019. It will be at the Historic 1625 Place in Tacoma. It promises to be an evening to remember.

John McGowan from 2Watch Electronic Home Monitoring gave the committee an update on the new equipment available. 2Watch has a charging unit that you can clip to your belt and charge the unit without having to take it off. They also have units that are about ½ the size of previous models that have GPS and are waterproof. 2Watch now has a link that potential customers can go to on-line and pre-register for services. Pre-registering on-line will significantly cut down the time involved in the initial set up appointment. 2Watch is an EHM company that gives a discounted rate for those individuals who qualify for a free or reduced cost attorney. Not all EHM companies have that option.

Jerimy Kirschner, a private practice attorney, brought forth for discussion the inadequacy in the homestead exemptions in the State of Washington (currently \$125,000). Mr. Kirschner also practices in Nevada where the exemptions are significantly higher. Mr. Kirschner explained that the recent boom in real estate has sent the value of homes skyrocketing. However, if you were to find yourself in unexpected financial trouble from say catastrophic medical bills, the bankruptcy court in

Washington could force you to sell your home if you had enough equity. The equity may have been generated from home value escalation and your diligence in paying your mortgage may come back to haunt you.

The next meeting is tentatively set for May 23, 2019 at the Harvester Restaurant. All are welcome.