

MACM MATTERS



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION FOR COURT MANAGEMENT Summer 2020

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President Update

By: Aaron Williamson

Project Manager, Hennepin County Criminal Court

Greetings MACM Members!

In the past I've encouraged you to be vulnerable, and so I want to share some of what's going on in my life. This should turn out to be my last article as MACM President and as such I want to leave you with something important to me. I want to discuss race and bring you in on some of my own personal growth related to this important topic.

I was out of town in May when I heard the news of the death of George Floyd and the subsequent gasp heard around the world. My heart was broken and I couldn't help but feel I had not done enough to make change in the criminal justice system, especially as it relates to racial disparities perpetuated by institutional and structural racism. It occurred to me that since I started working for the courts, I could see the pain and desperation of so many BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color) people involved in the justice system, from domestic abuse and harassment, to juvenile court, as a Hearing Officer, and finally as a manager in the Criminal Court.

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MACM Matters

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Any MACM member may submit an article for the newsletter. If interested, please contact Mary at Mary.Dalbec@courts.state.mn.us for more information.

It was difficult for me to be away from home, while the people of the city I've lived and worked in declared enough is enough. I felt pulled to be home, processing this with my community. Until last summer, we lived in a house about a mile away from the Third Police Precinct in the Longfellow neighborhood. Needless to say, things hit painfully home.

The weight of systemic racism is too heavy for our communities to hold onto any more. In our own court community, I know we haven't done enough to protect our employees of color from racism and isolation, especially anti-Black racism, which is experienced not only vicariously as we observe disparate treatment, but also directly, as our court staff and managers face explicit individual racist attacks while on the clock.

I wish it hadn't taken the death of George Floyd and so many others, for me to understand the importance of stating that Black lives matter. I didn't wake up and all of the sudden have a deeper understanding about race. I was committed to working for a just and fair judicial system, and when I learned more about the role of the court in perpetuating racial disparities over history, I needed to be a part of the change so I committed to learning as much as I can in order to be able to start doing some work to make it right. I'm still learning every day – taking the time to learn and unlearn, to listen, and to grow.



Aaron Williamson

Courts Free of Discrimination

The role of the courts to resolve disputes has not changed, but the idea that we're serving ALL of our constituents falls on weak ground in the current political and social climate we live in in 2020. We must look at all of our government institutions and question the processes creating outcomes that perpetuate systemic racism in our own institutional way. Thankfully there are tools and a plan is possible.

Focusing on racial equity aligns with both our Branch Mission and Vision:

To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

The general public and those who use the court system will refer to it as accessible, fair, consistent, responsive, free of discrimination, independent, and well-managed.

It's not just something we should do because it's nice. It's something we must do in order to fulfill our mission and vision for serving the people of Minnesota. Now, let's take this moment and see what we can do to advance racial equity and fight racism in our communities and in our courthouses.

Getting Started

Hopefully had a chance to watch the session Racial Equity is Court Business as part of the Court Business Conference. If you missed it, you can watch the session on Cornerstone on-demand now, if not.

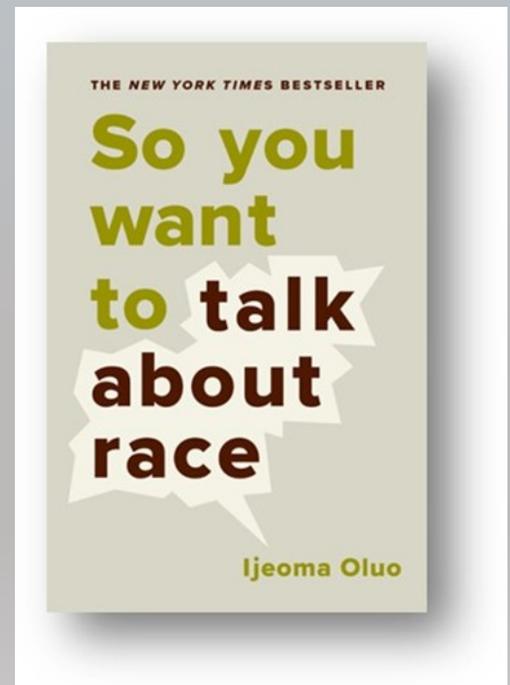
I'm grateful to work alongside two amazing racial justice leaders who presented with me. Shoreé Ingram is a MACM member and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist for Hennepin County District Court. Judge Angela Willms serves in the Criminal Court Bench as well at Hennepin County District Court. Both women have presented on racial equity and implicit bias for MACM at previous conferences.

The three of us will now be presenting the session on racial equity for our new judges in the Fourth District. I'm so grateful to be able to have a team to work on advancing racial equity like this, and many others I've worked on in the past. Their friendship brings meaning and worth to my work and life.

Now if you're not sure how to get started working towards racial equity, please at least start by **watching the session in Cornerstone**. From there, it's important you do the work of educating yourself on the impacts of racism if you're not familiar. Many of us who grew in predominately white settings were not fully educated by our families and schools, when it comes to the deep and sometimes dark history of our country as it relates to slavery and the impacts of racism which negatively impacting our BIPOC communities and neighbors today – often unconsciously because of how we're socialized.

So You Want To Talk About Race

A good book to get started is Ijeoma Oluo's "So You Want To Talk About Race." The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) is hosting an opportunity for folks in government to read the book together over the next six weeks and hold group facilitated discussions in mid-September. Please contact me if you're interested in participating! You don't have to process this information alone.



Commit to Learning and Growing

If you're ready to make a great commitment over the next couple of weeks, **commit to a 21-day challenge** to learn about racial equity from a number of different perspectives. Here are a few formats:

<https://www.ywcastpaul.org/racial-equity-challenge/>

<https://www.eddiemoorejr.com/21-day-racial-equity-challenge>

<https://debbyirving.com/21-day-challenge/>

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/labor_law/membership/equal_opportunity/

Finally, **start having conversations** about race. Talk to your family and friends about how race was or was not addressed in your neighborhoods and schools. Talk to your co-workers about how we can ensure all people who enter the courthouses are treated with dignity and respect. Treat people how they would want to be treated, not how you would want to be treated. **Racial equity means closing the gap** so someone's race does not impact their ability to succeed in any aspect of their lives.

Race Equity Toolkit

At the end of the Cornerstone Training, you'll **find some resources** for how to start to infuse racial equity considerations into your practices and decision-making process at work. Check out: <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/tools-resources/>

Addressing systemic racism isn't just about doing the right thing. It's about developing an understanding of how racism and the painful costs affect all of us, not just people who are discriminated against. If anyone in our community is hurting, we all hurt. And the costs of government systems that don't work are also paid by all of us.

I hope you'll engage in this important conversation and start committing to do the work. As MACM President, I am committed to working with the next group of officers to do a better job of serving our members and our constituents in this regard.

Being a leader is extremely hard; perhaps never harder than in 2020. Now more than ever we know the importance of taking care of our neighbors and joining together to fight injustices any of us face, because:

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

— Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail.

Membership Services Committee Update

By: Mary Dalbec, Committee Chair Carver County Court Administrator

Since our 2019 conference the Membership Services Committee has been focusing on MACM's Strategic Plan, 2020 and 2021 Conferences events, spring scholarships and most recently preparing for 2020 MACM Awards. In late June the committee requested award nominations for the 2020 MACM Awards which will be presented virtually in the fall. The awards are a great opportunity for our organization to show appreciation for some of the people going above and beyond the call of duty across the state. The 2020 award categories are:

*Champion of Change,
Distinguished Service,
Lifetime Achievement,
Coach/Mentor of the Year,
Early Career Excellence, and
Pandemic Hero.*



Mary Dalbec

Since our 2019 Conference and our June 2020 committee meeting we have approved and welcomed twenty-one new MACM members! Please join the committee in welcoming the below new members:

Naomi Roderick - 4th District - Supervising Forensic Psychometrist
Michael Valleau - 4th District - Legislative Liaison
Kristen Boudreau - 10th District - Anoka Court Operations Supervisor-Assignment Division
Lisa Bonke - 10th District - Anoka Court Operations Trainer
Elva Smith - 1st District - Goodhue County Court Operations Supervisor
Shelby Berger - 2nd District - Calendar Coordinator/Supervisor
Heather Mickelson - 10th District - Kanabec County Court Operations Supervisor
Sarah Spencer - 10th District - Pine County Court Operations Supervisor
Julie Mackcow - 9th District – Business Process Specialist
Samantha Hickman - 7th District - Benton County Court Operations Supervisor
Elizabeth Henderson - 6th District - Treatment Court Program Coordinator
Tamara Ybarra - 4th District - Hennepin County Civil Filing Court Operations Supervisor
Alona Carroll - 1st District – Business Process Specialist
Sara Taylor - 6th District - District Administrator
Sheila Pierson - 5th District - Cottonwood County Court Operations Supervisor
Stephanie Tonihka - 2nd District - Supervisor Accountant
Ernest Beaupain - 2nd District - IT Supervisor
Rick Hagelberg - SCAO - Senior IT Infrastructure Manager
Abby Gilmore - 3rd District - Wabasha County Court Administrator
Megan McMonagle - 5th District - Nicollet County Court Operations Supervisor
Rhonda Mackereth - 10th District - Court Operations Trainer

In accordance with MACM's 2020 Strategic Plan a survey was sent to all MACM members earlier this year. Thank you all for your valuable feedback, we greatly appreciated your assistance. The survey responses have assisted our committees with drafting plans to further ensure members have access to information by improving communication with new and existing members. We have also been working on updating our MACM website so it is more modern and easier to navigate. We're happy to share that the new and improved [MACM website](#) just launched and is now available! Please check out the latest design, we'd love to hear your feedback and input for further improvements too. One last reminder, MACM has a Facebook page where information is posted several times each month regarding new members, member promotions and retirements, current job postings and other court related information and updates. If you haven't already please visit the [MACM Facebook](#) page and like our page so you'll receive notifications on MACM updates.

Education Committee Update

By: Kris Cunningham, Committee Chair
Chisago County Court Administrator

I hope everyone is doing well during these strange and difficult times. The Education Committee, as well as the Board of Directors, had to make the very difficult decision to cancel this year's in person MACM Conference in Duluth. Although I know it is very disappointing to many of us, we felt it was necessary given our current situation. We will miss seeing everyone in person and all the great networking opportunities the conference gives us. On the bright side the education committee is exploring having some virtual sessions for a condensed 2020 conference, so look for more information on that to come. We are still in the process of looking at platforms to provide it, as well as a few potential speakers.



Kris Cunningham

We also are excited to announce that we were able to secure the Duluth location for our 2021 conference. It will be held on October 5 - 7 at the DECC and the Holiday Inn. They were very excited to have the opportunity to still host our conference. I hope everyone gets a chance to enjoy their summer!

Stay safe and well everyone.

Legislative and Outreach Committee Update

By: Sonja Kruger, Committee Chair

Court Programs Manager, Fifth Judicial District

MACM Day at the Capitol

The Legislative and Outreach Committee hosted the annual MACM Day at the Capitol event on Tuesday, March 3rd. Members spent the day meeting with legislators, attending committee hearings, and sharing the MACM message. Both veteran and novice members shared how much they enjoyed meeting with senators and representatives. Many reported that the conversations with them were relaxed and that the information shared was very well received.

Members attending MACM Day at the Capitol included Becky Brandt, Annette Fritz, Sonja Kruger, Jodie Pfeffer, Lindsay Snustad, and Michael Valleau.

We welcome all MACM members to attend next year's event, encourage members to follow the [Legislative Updates](#) page on CourtNet, and ask that you continue to build relationships with your local legislators.

The Legislative and Outreach Committee meets monthly, typically on the first Thursday of the month at 10:00 a.m. We are currently working on strategic planning initiatives, exploring outreach opportunities, and selecting a charitable organization to partner with for this year's annual conference. Please contact committee chair Sonja Kruger if you have questions about the committee and its work or if you are interested in joining.



Sonja Kruger



FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Dakota County Welcomes New Court Administrator and Deputy Court Administrator

Dakota County has a new Court Administrator - Maria Jost who came from the CAPS Unit and started on April 29th and Deputy Court Administrator - Holly Bohlken who was promoted from her supervisor role on June 17th. These two are rocking the COVID

Pandemic. Congratulations on your new positions!



Holly Bohlken

Maria Jost



Holly Bohlken

Maria Jost

FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT (CONT.)

Le Sueur County Moves into their New Courthouse

Le Sueur County built a new courthouse. Staff moved into the new building on September 3, 2019. The courthouse has much more space, a security entrance, and high technology court rooms.



FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT (CONT.)

Deb O'Brien Promoted to Supervisor in Scott County

Congratulations to Deb O'Brien who was promoted to supervisor of the scheduling and calendaring division in Scott County. Deb brings with her a wealth of knowledge and skills necessary to manage the growing calendar needs of Scott County. Scott County is the home of Mystic Lake Casino, Valleyfair, and Canterbury Downs. Congratulations, Deb!



Mystic Lake



Valleyfair

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Six New Supervisors in the Second



Tracey Ames became a Court Operations Supervisor in the Criminal Division of the Second Judicial District in March, 2020. As of June, 2020, she will supervise a newly created unit that coordinates process, procedure, training and development throughout the Criminal Division's locations. Tracey joined the Minnesota Judicial Branch in December of 2018 as the Training and Development Specialist in the Criminal Division of the Second District and previously worked as a Temporary Court Clerk for Ramsey County District Courts while attending college. Prior to coming back to the courts, Tracey had an almost 18-year career in retail assets protection and loss prevention management with Target, Macy's and Old Navy. She decided to change career fields because of her interest in working in public service versus the private sector. Tracey was born and raised in St. Paul, but has lived in Rochester and La Crosse, WI before settling back in St. Paul. In her spare time, Tracey likes to spend time with family and friends, travel, read books, keep up with current events and binge watch Netflix shows and movies.

Courtney Zuber became a Court Operations Supervisor in the Criminal Division of the Second Judicial District in March, 2020. Courtney supervises the Criminal Team at the main St. Paul courthouse. Courtney previously worked in the Ramsey County suburban office as a Court Operations Associate and most recently a Leadworker for the Criminal Division. Prior to her work with court administration she worked at Tubman as a Legal Advocate in Washington County. Courtney has three children and enjoys the outdoors and watching her children participate in various sports activities.



Shelby Berger joined the Second Judicial District in December of 2019 as a Calendar Coordinator for the Criminal Division. Shelby supervises the Criminal Assignment team. Shelby previously worked for the Appellate Courts as an Assistant Clerk. Prior to working for the Minnesota Judicial Branch, she worked as a Court Researcher for a background check agency called the McDowell Agency. Shelby has two cats and loves getting outside and being active. Her favorite activity is doing obstacles and being a ninja at a gym in Woodbury called Conquer Ninja!



SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT (CONT.)

Ernest R. Beaupain joined the Second Judicial District in December 2019 as an IT Supervisor. He leads a team of four great network specialists. He comes to the court with 22 years of IT experience. Ernest most recently worked for Mayo Clinic Health System and Hyland Software. Ernest has a 14 year old son and enjoys biking, golf, and travel.



Stephanie Tonihka joined the Second Judicial District as an Accounting Technician in March of 2014. Stephanie came to us from the private industry with over 20 years of accounting experience. In her time with the branch, she has made her way to Accounting Officer, graduated with her Bachelor's degree in Accounting, and more recently accepted the Accountant position with the District. Stephanie is married with one daughter and two dogs. She loves spending her free time with her family and friends.



Tess McNamara joined the Second Judicial District in December, 2016. She became the Juvenile Court Operations Supervisor in March, 2020, and supervises Juvenile Delinquency, Juvenile Traffic and Adoptions. She received her BA in Sociology of Law, Criminology and Deviance from the U of M. Prior to her work with court administration, Tess worked in the retail and maintenance fields. She enjoys hiking with her dog and working on her house.



FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Positivity During the Pandemic

By: Jennifer Miller, Court Operations Manager

On Tuesday, March 10th, managers and supervisors in the Fourth Judicial District met for a quarterly meeting that typically has a multiple agenda items covering various topics. However, this meeting would be very different. We had a singular focus: planning for a pandemic. We came to the table with our divisions, our existing contingency plans, and began to work through and adapt these strategies to meet the challenges of what our court was beginning to face.

While the last three months have certainly brought us daily tests, we have also seen a variety of unexpected positives and adaptations that were welcome revelations to our work life. Many positives or wins can be seen in every division. This list has been compiled from managers, daily communications, meetings notes and other conversations in our district:

Workforce and Workflow Positives:

- Staff adaptation to working from home has been fantastic with many positive surprises along the way.
- I've never been quite as appreciative of the teamwork I have experienced throughout this process. People are supporting and thanking each other for the difficult work they are doing to help us get through this uncharted territory. There is a new sense of pride in what we're able to accomplish together.
- Impressive collaboration to get the first two criminal jury trials up and running.
- Supervisors and managers have supported staff through daily check-ins in addition to regular team and 1:1 meetings.
- Cross-training of many duties amongst teams to allow for in-person staff to address in-person business needs.

Customers and Stakeholders:

- Even though calls to our contact center begin with urgent requests for help; staff are reporting more often than not, the call ends with a positive comment like, "be well," "stay healthy," or "thank you for helping me during this time."
- Stakeholder support and praise for our efforts during both the shutdown and resumption phases.

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT (CONT.)

Personal Connections through Technology:

- It's been fun to see kids, babies, cats, dogs, all kinds of parts of our colleagues lives we would not have experienced before. It's nice to see these little insights into who they are and how they live their lives.
- Staff reaching out to peers and sharing screens to assist and train virtually.
- Sharing and hearing stories of family Zoom chats from coworkers.
- A SharePoint photo library of adapted workspaces helped alleviate some anxiety over returning to a changed workplace.

These are just a few of the many examples of positive feedback and outcomes have brought us through all the challenges of the pandemic. We have learned a great deal and will continue to grow with whatever the future brings.

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

New Court Operation Supervisor in Nicollet County

By: Carol Weikle, Brown and Nicollet County Court Administrator

Congratulations to Megan McMonagle who has recently accepted the promotion to Court Operation Supervisor of Nicollet County in the 5th District! Megan has been with the Judicial Branch since 2014, serving as a Court Operations Associate in Nicollet County. Last year, Megan served as the subject matter expert on the Harassment Restraining Order project through SCAO. Megan's work on that project has made a significant difference for filers and law enforcement, who now receive Harassment Restraining Order data and documents statewide. Megan's first day in her new role was May 13th, 2020.



Megan McMonagle

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

2020 Diversity and Inclusion Conference

By: Elizabeth Henderson, Program Coordinator, Mental Health Court

"It is a time to pull people together ... it is a time to listen. It is a time to learn, when injustices continue despite progress over years and decades."

Justin Trudeau

2020 Diversity and Inclusion Conference: *Advancing Commitments to Equality and Justice*

Treatment Court Coordinators in the Sixth Judicial District recognize it is our responsibility to bring equity and inclusion to our Treatment Courts. The Arrowhead Region is diverse and so are the needs of our participants. Therefore, we must build an infrastructure that includes listening, learning and unifying our efforts for positive cultural and systemic change. In an effort to align ourselves with the Committee for Equality and Justice (CEJ), the Sixth Judicial District Treatment Courts planned and hosted a Diversity and Inclusion Conference titled *Advancing Commitments to Equality and Justice* in January 2020. The conference promoted:

1. **Access and Fairness:** Conference speakers presented on race-related and bias-related data. Attendees had an opportunity to listen to and discuss recommendations for improvement in processes, procedures, and policies within the treatment courts.
2. **Outreach:** Attendees discussed potential outreach efforts and future opportunities within the District.
3. **Education:** Conference speakers offered expertise for continued diversity, inclusion and implicit bias education programs for the treatment courts.

The conference brought together over 80 attendees from across the District including mental health professionals, treatment providers, law enforcement, case managers, Judges, coordinators, and others who serve the state's treatment court participants.

Local presenters included:

Carl Crawford. City of Duluth's Equal Opportunity Representative, Human Rights Officer.

Melissa Walls, PhD. Director of the Great Lakes Hub for the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health and associate professor of International Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Paula J. Pedersen, Ed.D. Director of Education for Inclusive Excellence Chancellor at the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT (CONT.)

Overall, the feedback from the conference was extremely positive. One attendee of the conference reflected by saying, “I saw many judges in attendance but I would love to see more local judges and prosecutors/defense attorneys [in attendance] to aid in education and justice reform”. Another attendee stated, “[The conference] surpassed my expectations in all of the right ways”. While another stated “It was awesome to listen to this native sister...to get others to understand about aspects of our journey in time. Hope for more understanding and opening doors.” This conference has unified our efforts, as treatment courts, to effectively respond to the diverse needs of individuals who encounter the justice system.

In essence, the positive and encouraging responses to this first ever ‘Treatment Court Diversity and Inclusion Conference’ within the District has given conference planners, Elizabeth Henderson, Lindsay Snustad and Judge Beiers, the desire to make this an annual event. Community discussions to foster positive change must continue. As leadership expert Max De Pree once said, “We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy, healing and inclusion” and that’s what we intend to do.



Honorable Leslie E. Beiers introducing the conference and speakers.



Liz Henderson, Duluth Mental Health Court Coordinator, welcoming attendees

TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

New Changes in the Tenth

By: Erin Boettcher, 10th District Document Acceptance Team Supervisor

When looking back over the last year, it's amazing to see the transformation in the Tenth Judicial District, and the Judicial Branch as a whole. The Tenth has welcomed several new administrators within the past year, and also bid farewell to some great ones along the way. Sheldon Clark and Tracy Gullerud were appointed as Deputy District Administrators – Sheldon over Administration and Tracy over Operations. Tracy also serves as the Kanabec County Court Administrator. Megan Bergman was recently promoted as Isanti County Court Administrator. Amy Isaacson was promoted to Pine County Court Administrator following the retirement of Lu Ann Blegen. Kris Cunningham was promoted as the Chisago County Court Administrator following the retirement of Kathleen Karnowski. Julie Welt joined Washington County as the Chief Deputy and Lindsay Allgood joined Anoka County as the Court Services Division Manager. Congratulations to each of you and thank you for your contributions to our district.

Along with leadership transitions, the Tenth has implemented some large case processing changes as well. In October of 2019, the Tenth implemented the District wide Document Acceptance Team, or DAT. DAT consists of twelve full time acceptors who accept all electronically filed documents for the District. The acceptors are specialized based on case type and document security, and actively facilitate case processing consistency district wide.

Most recently, our District has begun the implementation of Task Manager. The Task Manager initiative has been led by Sheldon Clark and Amanda Jewell, Business Process Specialist. They have facilitated in-depth discussions and process mapping sessions over the past year, which included all levels of court administration and judicial teams. Wright County will lead our District on the Task Manager implementation, with a go-live date of August 4.

Wright County is also excited to move into their new courthouse. After years of planning and building, Wright County anticipates moving in late August. It will be a modern, technologically advanced (compared to their current facility!) court facility building that will provide much larger courtrooms and working spaces. The staff and Judges have worked incredibly hard on the new design and we all are very excited for them to move into their new home.

During this time of remote working, we have looked for fun ways to stay in touch and maintain a personal connection. Each morning, all staff and judges receive our daily "We Will Get By" feature. Each day it features someone new, and you never know who it will be from as anyone in the district can participate. It is a one to two page question and answer feature with some fun pictures and fun facts about that employee or judge. People share their hobbies from painting and gardening, to biking and singing. It has been a fun way to keep in touch and get to know each other better.

TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT (CONT.)

Tenth Judicial District Welcomes Julie Welt

By: Annette Fritz, Washington County Court Administrator

The Tenth Judicial District, Washington County welcomed Julie Welt as the Chief Deputy Court Administrator on April 8. As Chief Deputy Julie manages the operations including contracts for legal services, mediation, etc. for areas supervised. A team of 4 supervisors and 25 staff report to Julie including court scheduling, jury management, civil, conciliation, family, juvenile delinquency and child protection. The chief deputy works with other managers in the office to coordinate efforts. She works with the ten chambered judges on processes and issues. Julie has worked with the judicial branch since 2004 in Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties, and most recently was the Court Administrator in Wabasha County, Third Judicial District. Julie succeeds Kris Cunningham who was appointed to the Chisago County Court Administrator position in February. Julie joined Washington County in the midst of COVID19 Pandemic and has been learning and sharing her knowledge at an accelerated pace. We are fortunate to gain the excellent skills and talent that Julie brings.



The Tenth takes on “The Energy Bus” by Jon Gordon

By: Megan Bergman, Isanti County Court Administrator

Ever heard of “Energy Vampires” or “feed the positive dog”? No? I had not either. Until I read *The Energy Bus* by Jon Gordon a few years back. There is no denying that the past few months have been exhausting, draining, and downright stressful. We’ve never worked harder and more strenuously to roll out new procedures, come up with changes in processes on a weekly basis, and completely re-think how to do business in the Minnesota Judicial Branch than we have now. COVID-19 has brought on not only an unprecedented time in our history in regard to illness, but has brought our normal lives to a standstill.

Isanti County Court Administration, along with a new Supervisor (that’s me) at the time, had been waiting for an opportunity to begin a new team building exercise in the form of a Book Club back in February. The first item on the list to delve into was *The Energy Bus*. Waiting for the right time to fit it into our busy schedules, the pandemic hit. “What a better time than a pandemic to start a book about positive energy,” thought a new Isanti County Supervisor one fine morning. And so began the beginning of Team Isanti’s journey following the fictitious main character George’s experiences in his broken down life both personal and professional. We watch as an unexpected circumstance brings him along for the most positive ride of his life. Forced to take a ride on a public transit bus, bus driver Joy shows George the way to a more positive outlook on life.

TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT (CONT.)

“For managers and team leaders or anyone looking to turn negative energy in to positive achievement, *The Energy Bus* provides a powerful plan for overcoming common life and work obstacles and bringing out the best in yourself and your team. When you get on *The Energy Bus*, you’ll enjoy the ride of your life.” (Gordon 2007) Throughout our journey following George and Joy as they break-down 10 ways to bring more positivity into your life and teams, we find many obstacles and solutions along the way. They begin with the very first rule that begins your journey on *The Energy Bus* which is: You’re the Driver of Your Bus.

Is there anyone that needed to hear that today? You. And you alone drive your bus. We decide where we go, what we fuel it with, and the approach we want to take behind the wheel of OUR own bus. Your life. Your choices. You are the one who decides. In this book, it methodically dissects the negativity that we bring in to our day, and how we can achieve a life that is fueled by positivity and driven by the only one who has the ultimate power to keep the positivity going: you.

Team Isanti has paused halfway through the book due to challenging demands in our daily work. But I believe that we started with planting the seed that positivity can change many things. It can change our outlook, our stress level, our happiness, and infect others. Positivity is infectious. And this positive vibe can begin with one tiny seed planted, by you. Start the journey, take the ride, and drive your bus. Just make sure you decide to take the path that is fueled by positivity, light, and joy and just see where your bus will take you.

“Positive energy is like a muscle. The more you use it the stronger it gets.” – Jon Gordon *The Energy Bus*

Gordon, Jon. *The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to fuel your life, work and team with positive energy*. John Wiley & Sons. 2007.

