

# MEDINA COUNTY JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT NEWSLETTER

JUDGE KEVIN W. DUNN JUNE/JULY 2015

## VOLUNTEER GUARDIANSHIP PROGRAM CELEBRATES 11 YEARS AT ANNUAL PICNIC



Volunteers gather to celebrate at the annual Medina County Volunteer Guardianship Picnic at the Brunswick Eagles Club June 4, 2015.  
*Photos courtesy of Russ Houston*

The Medina County Volunteer Guardianship Program hosted its annual picnic to celebrate and recognize the caring volunteers who give their time to serve as guardians for those who cannot help themselves.

Approximately 25 volunteer guardians, court personnel and donors celebrated the 11th anniversary of Medina County Volunteer Guardianship Program June 4, 2014 at the Brunswick Eagles Club.

Retired Judge John Lohn, who filled in for Judge Kevin Dunn during the event, paraphrased King Solomon's message about a time and season for everything before the volunteers enjoyed a dinner of pizza, pasta,

chicken and salad in the pavilion. There were also cupcakes for dessert, donated by Medina County Home.

The program, which began in Medina County in 2004, currently has 25 active wards – people incapable of managing their own affairs, either because of age or mental illness – and 32 trained volunteer guardians.

Judge Lohn and Volunteer Guardianship Coordinator Nicki Shook recognized and thanked each volunteer for their years of service, ranging from five to eleven years, and also thanked The National Association of Legal Professionals of Northeast Ohio who generously donated to the Volunteer

Guardianship Program again this year.

Court Administrator and VGP board member Sharon Danko said that while the volunteers are the heart of the program, it's the Volunteer Guardianship Coordinator Nicki Shook who keeps everything flowing smoothly.

"Nicki Shook pulls everything together," Danko said as Shook's daughter, Kayla, stood up to present her mother with a bouquet of flowers. "This program would not be viable without you."

To learn more about the Medina County Volunteer Guardianship Program or how to become involved, visit [MedinaProbate.org](http://MedinaProbate.org).



Medina County Volunteer Guardianship Board members Louise Brown, Sharon Danko, Nicki Shook, Joyce Giles and Lori Betz.



VGP Coordinator Nicki Shook and retired Judge John Lohn with NALP representatives, Doris Steidl, Tina Wingfield, and Judy Pluta.

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### 13 COMPUTERS PROVIDED FOR DETAINED YOUTH TO CONTINUE ONLINE SCHOOLING

Juveniles enrolled in online school will now be able to continue their education while detained in the Medina County Juvenile Detention Center.

Thanks to funding and support provided by Medina City Schools, the MCJDC now has 13 desktops available for students to complete work through Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), Tri-Rivers Educational Computer Association (TRECA), Ohio Distance and Electronic Learning Academy (OHDELA), and other online schooling options.

Previously, when a student who did not attend traditional school was detained in the detention center, the MCJDC teachers would print off any assignments they could manage to access online, and the youth would complete their work “the old fashioned way.”

“Due to the circumstances in some of these kids’ lives, their schooling is already suffering before they come in,” said MCJDC Superintendent Ron Stollar. “So once they’re here, our goal is to keep them from sliding backwards if we can do that.”

One of the requirements of online schooling is that the students must log in every day. Without the option to log in while detained in the MCJDC, students, who are detained for an average of 25 days at a time, were facing potential dismissal from the program. This means that once they were released from detention, they may have to return to

traditional school and reapply for online schooling.

“Many of these students no longer attend traditional school because they had behavioral issues or difficulty focusing in the classroom,” Judge Kevin Dunn said. “We don’t want to have them removed from their online



schooling option and risk any progress they may have made.”

During the summer, MCJDC residents are in class for four hours per day. Stollar said the new method to complete online schooling will not change the MCJDC daily schedule for current residents.

“There are six computers available in one classroom and seven in the other,” Stollar said. “Schedule wise, it doesn’t change anything because the online students will be at the computers against the wall while other students will continue their traditional work at their desks.”

Stollar said he doesn’t believe students working on the computers will be a distraction to other residents or vice versa.

“We are used to housing kids with a range of ages, academic levels, maturity and emotions, so our teachers are used to handling all those different variables anyway,” he said. “They will be able to keep everyone on task and focused.”

As far as security, the juveniles will not have access to any websites or computer programs other than their school site.

“It is as locked down as it possibly can be thanks to the IT Department from Medina City Schools,” Stollar said. “They can only go to the approved sites and the teachers are able to see from their monitor’s exactly what the students are looking at on theirs.”

Superintendent Stollar and Assistant Superintendent Rick Reuss will also have access to see what the students are viewing from their office computers.

“We are very thankful to Medina City Schools for providing these computers to the Juvenile Detention Center,” Judge Dunn said. “We do our best to keep these youth on the right track and these computers will help us with that goal.”

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## COURT RECEIVES TECH GRANT FUNDS FOR IMPROVEMENTS AND UPGRADES

The Medina County Probate and Juvenile Court will continue to progress and utilize current technology thanks to approval from the Supreme Court of Ohio for approximately \$31,000 from the Technology Grant Fund.

These funds, available under the Ohio Courts Technology Initiative, will be used to help offset the costs of new digital audio recording equipment and software upgrades, as well as to purchase a Storage Area Network (SAN) device, allowing the Court to save digital images, digital audio recordings and to scan old paper records to digital images.

“We’ve had the ability to import scanned digital images into our database for years, but storage space is a barrier,” said Network Administrator Mike Stiles. “A SAN device will allow us the space to store more information as we move to become a paperless Court.”

Stiles said the SAN device will not only provide additional digital storage space, it will also free-up physical space in the Court’s vaults and will help reduce costs of purchasing office supplies, such as paper and printer ink.

In addition to a SAN device, the technology grant funds will also be used to help offset the cost of upgrading the Court’s software for the Digital Court Recording system, which was installed in 2006.

“Our recording system does not work well with our current software,” Stiles said. “Sometimes older software is not compatible with today’s operating systems. This incompatibility could cause our system to crash and that increases the possibility for loss of recordings. This software upgrade will be more reliable with immediate and quick accessibility.”

Judge Kevin Dunn said the risk of losing recordings is not an option in his Court.



Network Administrator Mike Stiles and Judge Kevin Dunn holding Medina County Probate and Juvenile Court’s new Storage Area Network device.

“We have an obligation at the Court to provide transcripts of hearings,” he said. “Because our current software isn’t reliable, we have to hire a court reporter at a tremendous cost. These funds will provide dramatic savings.”

A portion of the grant funds will also be used to purchase additional digital audio recording equipment for use in the Court’s video teleconferencing and hearing room – a newly-designated room for daily juvenile detention hearings, eliminating the need to take over a

magistrate’s courtroom for an hour or more each day.

Judge Dunn said the video teleconferencing and hearing room will also provide a local location in Medina County for necessary training sessions for community members who assist with Court programs.

“This new equipment will allow us to have video-linked trainings for members of our community who help with our various programs,” Judge Dunn said. “For example, members of our Volunteer Guardianship Program may be able to come to the courthouse for upcoming training sessions rather than the hassle of driving to Columbus.”

Judge Dunn added how thankful he is to the Supreme Court for approving the grant applications.

“It’s more than just buying new gadgets,” Judge Dunn said. “These upgrades will do great things for the Court and I’m grateful that the Supreme Court looked positively on our applications. I’m eager to get the new equipment up and running.”

The process to purchase, upgrade and install all of the audio software has already been completed. The installation of the SAN device will be completed by August of this year.



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## MAGISTRATES ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AND JUVENILE DEPUTY CLERK GET SWORN IN

Medina County Juvenile and Probate court recently gained two new employees. Beth Loomis began June 22 as the Magistrates' Administrative Assistant while Lauren Duke, who was sworn in July 6, became the newest Juvenile Deputy Clerk.

### **Beth Loomis** Magistrates' Administrative Assistant



Beth Loomis was sworn in by Judge Kevin Dunn as Administrative Assistant to the Magistrates on June 22.

Loomis will assist the Medina County Juvenile and Probate Court's four magistrates by typing orders and helping with research for court cases, among other tasks.

"I've never worked in a court before so the language and court process is something I have to get used to, but the magistrates and all the people who work here have been very helpful," Loomis said.

Loomis is a Medina County native and graduate of Highland High School. This is her first return home to live in Medina since she left to attend college at Ohio University.

"I'm happy to begin this job with the Juvenile and Probate Court but the added perk is that all of my family is here in Medina," Loomis said. "It's great to be back around them again and to be back in this community."

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### **Lauren Duke** Juvenile Court Deputy Clerk



Lauren Duke was sworn in as the newest Juvenile Deputy Clerk July 6, 2015.

Duke will be responsible for processing juvenile charges and court paperwork, setting hearings with the magistrates and multiple other tasks as necessary.

Duke, who grew up in Medina County and graduated from Medina High School, is familiar with the Probate and Juvenile Court. She worked as a part-time file clerk during her summer and winter college breaks from 2010 to 2013.

"The transition has been a little bit

easier because I'm familiar with the court and the computer system we use, but I'm still learning new things every day," Duke said.

Prior to joining the Court, Duke worked as a customer service representative for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in Akron.

"I liked it there but I wanted a job that helped people," she said. "Ever since my law classes in college, I've had an interest in the legal system. That's what urged me to come back to the Court and I'm happy to be here."