



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
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Lake County
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LAKE COUNTY ESTABLISHES SMALL CLAIMS MEDIATION PROGRAM

Chief Judge Fred Foreman announced the establishment of a Small Claims Mediation Program in Lake County that will apply to small claims and eviction cases. The program will open in June and offer free mediation services by volunteer members of the Lake County Bar Association to people acting without an attorney in small claims and other consumer litigation. The mediations will take place at the courthouse and, if the matter is settled, will reduce court appearances by *pro se* litigants. Mediations will begin in early June for cases in Courtrooms 306 and 307.

Chief Judge Foreman said, "One of the primary goals of the Small Claims Mediation Program is to serve poor and low-income litigants who have housing, consumer or other disputes to reach a resolution quickly and with a high degree of satisfaction in the outcome. Studies have demonstrated that litigants who participate in mediation often reach a more satisfactory mutual agreement and spend less time litigating before a judge."

On April 13, 2012, the Lake County Circuit Court and the Lake County Bar Association provided four hours of free mediation training to Lake County Bar Association member volunteers. Training covered ethical issues, mediation techniques and both a demonstration by a professional mediator as well as a supervised practice mediation conducted by the trainee. The training was moderated by retired Judge Terry Brady, and featured presentations by Judge Michael Fusz, Judge John Scully, and Judge Margaret Mullen. Renowned professional mediator and McHenry attorney Case Ellis coordinated the curriculum, presented the keynote address, and demonstrated mediation techniques, along

with attorney Phil Glick of Highland Park, and attorney Meghann Sweeney, the Executive Director of the International Academy of Dispute Resolution.

Judge Margaret Mullen, Presiding Judge of the Law Division, commented, “We think the program is a win/win. The litigants will be happier. The judges will see the cases resolve more efficiently. I would like to thank the Lake County Bar Association for its leadership and its *pro bono* spirit, as well as its members who have volunteered and agreed to serve the public in this way.” LCBA President Perry Smith pointed to the many pro bono hours its members donate serving at the courthouse and community and said, “I am proud of the tireless work of this association for the community. I attended the training for small claims mediators, and I feel proud to be able to assist the Court and serve as a mediator in this endeavor.”

Attorney Robert Monahan of Gurnee attended the training and will serve as a volunteer. He said, “The training really showed how mediation works and demonstrated how rewarding it is to help people find a middle ground in an issue that was so upsetting they filed a lawsuit. I look forward to volunteering as a mediator.” Associate Circuit Judge John Scully, who presides in Small Claims Court, helped to develop the program in coordination with Delta Hawkins, Arbitration Administrator for the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit of Illinois. Judge Scully said, “Often small claims court is a confusing and scary place for people who are already frustrated by the dispute that brought them to court in the first place. Small Claims Mediation will help people through the process. Mediators will be there at the first court date. If the parties settle with the help of a volunteer mediator, they will have saved both the aggravation and inconvenience of a second court appearance for trial.”

For further information please contact Delta Hawkins at 847-377-3700.

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