

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

contact: Marcia McBrien | (313) 972-3219 or (517) 373-0129

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT TO CELEBRATE LAW DAY MAY 1, 2007; HALL OF JUSTICE LEARNING CENTER VISITORS TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERACTIVE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRESENTATIONS; MGTV TO AIR PROGRAMS WITH FOCUS ON DISPUTE RESOLUTION INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

LANSING, MI, April 30, 2007 – The Michigan Supreme Court will join the nation’s celebration of Law Day on Tuesday, May 1, 2007. This year’s Law Day theme of *Liberty Under Law: Empowering Youth, Assuring Democracy* focuses on issues facing today’s youth, all of whom need to understand their rights as well as their responsibilities to sustain and strengthen American democracy.

Visitors to the Hall of Justice Learning Center will meet with members of the judiciary and guest speakers and learn more about restorative justice, a successful practice with students in the Lansing School District as well as youth around the world. Nancy Schertzing, who works with Lansing and other Ingham County schools on restorative justice issues, will make brief interactive presentations to each of the groups.

Restorative justice provides an approach to school discipline that engages all the parties affected by student misconduct. It empowers the victim and the school community to identify the harm caused by the offender and define what must be done to repair it. This differs from simply punishing the offender. Restorative justice empowers the offender to take the necessary steps to heal the harm and return to the community as a full, productive member. By imposing accountability, restorative justice gives students the skills to resolve future conflicts peacefully.

Additional speakers at Supreme Court Law Day activities include:

- Deborah Adams, past president of the Ingham County Bar Association and attorney with the firm of White, Schneider, Young and Chiodini, P.C.;
- David Brake, president of the Ingham County Bar Association and attorney with the firm of Knaggs, Harter, Brake and Schneider, P.C.;
- Judge Janelle A. Lawless, presiding judge of the 30th Circuit Court Family Division;
- Michigan Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Markman;
- Prof. Martha Denning Moore, member of the Cooley Law School faculty;
- Judge Donald S. Owens of the Michigan Court of Appeals;
- Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor;

- Chief Judge William C. Whitbeck of the Michigan Court of Appeals; and
- Prof. Nancy Wonch, member of the Cooley Law School faculty.

Four Law Day posters created by fifth-grade students from Cornell Elementary School in Okemos will be on display in the Learning Center. The poster contest was sponsored by NALS, an association for legal professionals.

In observance of this year's theme, Michigan Government Television will air two programs with particular focus on initiatives that resolve disputes among youth. Guests include Doug Van Epps, director of the Office of Dispute Resolution, Supreme Court Administrative Office, and Bonnie Hanes, director of the Oakland Mediation Center, one of 20 offices across the state that encourages parties to try to reach a resolution of their disputes without a trial, either on their own or through mediation. The Oakland Mediation Center is specially credentialed to facilitate the Peers Making Peace program that helps make students safe and teaches them to find peaceful solutions to disagreements. The peer mediation process looks to defuse disputes, before they become volatile eliminating the need for disciplinary action, and helps to establish a positive environment for students and staff.

Guests for the second televised program about resolving disputes include Nancy Schertzing, Restorative Justice Program Coordinator, and Rachael Drenovsky, Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center Coordinator. Each program is 30 minutes and both will air on May 1.

Law Day is a national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. In 1957, American Bar Association President Charles S. Rhyne, a Washington, D.C. attorney, envisioned a special day for celebrating our legal system. In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established Law Day to strengthen America's great heritage of liberty, justice, and equality under law. In 1961, May 1 was designated by joint resolution of Congress as the official date for celebrating Law Day.

The Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center is located on the first floor of the Michigan Hall of Justice, 925 West Ottawa Street, Lansing, Michigan 48915. For information about tours, please contact Shawn Olds at 517-373-7444 or oldss@courts.mi.gov. For more information about the Learning Center, visit <http://www.courts.mi.gov/plc/>. Check www.mgtv.org for the MGTV program schedule.

-- MSC --