

JUDGE JENNIFER MAZZUCHI

Even after being on the bench for eight years, Marquette County Circuit Court Judge Jennifer Mazzuchi still takes the opportunity to don a “new judge hat” every year.

She finds great value in attending the biennial Michigan Judicial Institute’s New Judge School, and says, “Even after you’ve been a judge for a while, it is an opportunity to refresh. Listening to some of this information again causes you to read or see something that you may not practice every day.”

As the Michigan Supreme Court’s educational arm, MJI has become an important part of her role as a jurist and as a leader. She has served on MJI planning committees and as a program presenter.

Before joining the bench, she began her own education by earning her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and her law degree from Wayne State University School of Law. Judge Mazzuchi then worked in the prosecutor’s office in Marquette County for about 12 years. She is grateful for the training she received from her former boss, Gary Walker, one of the longest serving prosecutors in the state of Michigan.

“I worked for him for many years, and really learned a great deal from him,” she recalls.

Judge Mazzuchi also made sure to acknowledge fellow Marquette County Circuit Judge Tom Solka, who will be ending his 18-year tenure in December 2016.



Judge Jennifer Mazzuchi

“We’ve become close friends and colleagues,” she shares. “He’s been a mentor, even after I became a judge.”

Having been guided, educated, and supported by these mentors as she progressed in her own career has impressed upon Judge Mazzuchi the importance of planning a smooth transition. This is key now that she has taken on the role of the Circuit Court Chief Judge Pro Tem and has begun preparing the Court for a major reorganization.

Judge Mazzuchi says education, planning key to successful court reorganization.



Because of a Supreme Court plan to reduce and reallocate judgeships throughout Michigan, Marquette County will lose the seat currently held by Judge Solka, once he retires.

Michigan’s State Court Administrative Office releases a Judicial Resources Recommendations (JRR) every other year, which analyzes changes in judicial workloads and recommends the most effective number of judges statewide. All reductions are proposed to be accomplished by attrition when a judge leaves office or dies.

According to the 2013 JRR, “the Legislature eliminated one judgeship from the 25th Circuit Court and when a vacancy occurs in that court the number of judgeships in Marquette County will reduce from five to four.”

With Judge Solka’s retirement, this vacancy will finally take effect.

“We’re losing a judge position, so that’s a big focus of ours right now — how we are going to reshuffle things and realign things to accommodate that change,” she explains. “Losing a judge calls for a lot of change within the county — which judges are going to do what, and how are we going to get the work done with fewer people.” She is grateful for the excellent working relationships among judges in the county.

As she plans to reorganize court operations, Judge Mazzuchi is also making it a priority to improve court security.

“At the very least, we are undergoing an evaluation and cost projection on court security,” she says.

Security is of the highest priority in courtrooms across the state, especially following the tragedy in Berrien County. MJJ offers many resources on courtroom security, among other critical areas.



Judge Mazzuchi in the courtroom

“I work in a small county, so the variety of issues we address calls for some degree of knowledge or expertise in many areas. MJJ offers a lot of educational materials and is always a great resource,” says Judge Mazzuchi.

“From benchbooks and educational materials, to meeting other judges, making contacts and staying involved, it is very helpful,” she continues.

Thanks to the commitment of jurists such as Judge Mazzuchi who devote time to sharing their knowledge and expertise with colleagues, all Michigan judges have access to the abundant resources offered through the Supreme Court and MJJ. These efforts allow Michigan’s judges to better handle issues in the courtroom, develop as leaders in their communities, and prepare for what lies ahead in the judiciary.

When she isn’t on the bench or contributing to an MJJ educational program, Judge Mazzuchi enjoys spending time with her husband of 15 years, a neurologist, and their children: a 13-year-old son and an 11-year-old daughter. 🏠