

Judge Joyce Draganchuk has a secret formula

With more than 30 years of experience in the legal field, she credits her success on the bench in the 30th Circuit Court in Ingham County to a very simple directive she developed early in her career: being prepared.

“I don’t believe in winging it,” said Judge Draganchuk. “I believe in being prepared. That means reading the briefs, reading the law, knowing the arguments, knowing the facts of the case, and truly using this skill that I developed.”

Showing up prepared not only gives her confidence in herself, she says, but it gives other people confidence in her, too.

In fact, in 2013, Judge Draganchuk was among the group of original 18 judges who were first tapped to be business court judges in Michigan.

“I have always believed that the best things in life are the things that you struggle for, the things that you really sweat and work to achieve. If it comes easy, it is not as gratifying when you get it,” she remarked. “I saw business court cases to be the ultimate challenge.”

Judge Draganchuk takes a unique approach when handling her business court cases. She meets with the attorneys



Judge Joyce Draganchuk

very early on in the case at the initial scheduling conference. During this time she will ask them open-ended questions in regards to how they feel the case will progress.

In doing this, she finds that mediation skills are essential.

By mediating between the attorneys and getting them to think about handling cases in a new way, she believes she is able to create resolution in the most efficient way possible.

“When I can send attorneys on their way toward an early facilitated mediation



or maybe some other way of early case resolution, and then have them return a short time later to tell me that the case has been settled, that is meaningful to me," Judge Draganchuk shared.

With such a passion and focus for her business court docket, as well as the criminal court docket, it may seem surprising that Judge Draganchuk didn't initially set her sights on being a judge, at all. Law school was not even in her plans.

But during her career as a legal secretary, a lawyer had approached her and encouraged her to take the next step. After earning her law degree from Wayne State University School of Law and later working as a prosecutor, she says that becoming a judge seemed like a natural progression.

"I never dreamed of it when I was 12, or anything like that, it just happened. After years of being a prosecutor, there was an open seat on the 30th Circuit Court," she recalled. "Some friends approached me and suggested I run. So I ran, and that's how I ended up being a judge."

Judge Draganchuk has been re-elected to

the bench for three consecutive terms. Her favorite part about the job is the power that comes with it allowing her to make a significant impact on a person's life.

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"It's not the kind of power you have from sitting higher than everyone else in the courtroom wearing a black robe," she explained. "It's the power of my words in my position that can really influence people and drive people to do better."

Judge Draganchuk says that often times in her criminal docket when she is sentencing a nonviolent offender, she will make it a point to say things to that person like, "You can do better," or "I think you are very worthwhile," and to look for the good in them.

In doing this, Judge Draganchuk has had multiple instances where these certain people have gotten out of prison and come back to her courtroom to thank her for the motivation she gave them to lead a successful life.

Moments like this, according to Judge Draganchuk, is what makes her job even more worthwhile. 🛠️