

Judge Julie Reincke: Smoothing the Road to Recovery

It all comes down to the “Golden Rule” for Eaton County District Judge Julie Reincke.

“My parents modeled my ‘giving back’ behavior,” Judge Reincke recalled.

Through their volunteer work at church and leadership roles in various community organizations, she says they “exemplified the ‘Golden Rule.’” So it comes as no surprise that she has followed in their footsteps.

Appointed in 2006 to the 56A District Court in Eaton County, Judge Reincke not only employs this concept in the court, but also outside the court in her role as Vice President of Eaton County Families Against Narcotics (FAN), which she was active in launching. She was inspired to take action after receiving feedback from one of her probation officers and an undersheriff on the need to help educate the public, law enforcement, and the legal community about the problems in their area stemming from drug addiction, as well as the need to support families affected by addiction.

Founded in 2007 by Macomb County Judge Linda Davis, FAN is a community-based program for those seeking recovery, those in recovery, and family members and friends affected by addiction—a major focus on FAN. The group works to educate communities of the dangers of prescription drug abuse, especially painkillers, as well as illegal drugs, such as heroin. There are currently 21 chapters across Michigan, including the one in Eaton County.

“I derive great satisfaction in being able to participate in the healing of our people,” shared Judge Reincke. “I am repeatedly inspired every day by the people who come before me in court, many of whom have really difficult lives.”

In presiding over both a sobriety court and domestic violence treatment court, she also sees firsthand the effects of recovery programs on individuals who are struggling with substance use disorders and/or domestic violence. According to Judge Reincke, the majority of people who serve probationary sentences in these treatment courts emerge as “new people”—with integrity, self-confidence, good relationships, sobriety, better jobs, and better financial circumstances.

She continues to help these individuals through her role on the executive board of WAI-IAM Rise (pronounced “Way I Am”), a local sober-living facility that also works with local treatment courts. The organization was founded by a mother-son duo who survived nearly a decade in the world of addiction.

“It is important for judges to give back to their communities, because most of us have been given so much throughout our lives,” reflected Judge Reincke. “We owe it to others to share some of our advantages.”