

COURTNEWS

AN ONLINE NEWSLETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

HON. MARK R. FORCUM
PRESIDING JUDGE

HON. GEORGE A. MIRAM
ASSISTANT PRESIDING JUDGE

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E-DELIVERY—THE SAN MATEO SUPERIOR COURT SERVING YOU

Our Court created the extremely innovative EZLegalFile program, which allows you to fill out court forms online. This user-friendly system simplifies and makes easier the filing of forms in the areas of Family Law, Small Claims, Housing, and Guardianships. This year, the Administrative Office of the Courts recognized EZLegalFile for excellence in innovation. Our administration, consistent with its goal of making the court system more user friendly and economical, has now implemented e-delivery to allow for the electronic submission of court forms and payment of filing fees. Once e-delivered, court forms are filed and an endorsed filed copy is returned to the user. This enhancement is now being successfully used in small claims and eviction filings in the San Mateo County Superior Court.

By the end of the year, we hope to have a similar e-delivery system for family law, guardianships and general civil cases. E-delivery is a tremendous advancement. It removes the need to come to the courthouse to file your papers, which, in turn, cuts down on the expense and time wasted driving, parking and waiting in line. E-delivery also helps everyone as it helps save valuable taxpayer dollars by increasing efficiency in court operations. Usage of Internet-based systems like this reduce reliance on clerical staff processing papers.



E-delivery will reduce the need to come to court to file your legal

We would like to sincerely thank our excellent Court CEO Peggy Thompson, Internet Technology Director Tim Benton, Deputy Court Executive Officer Bill Lowell and Outreach Coordinator Jill Selvaggio

WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONERS AND REFEREE

On behalf of the Court, we extend a warm welcome to our newest commissioners, Joseph Allen and Richard Kelly, and referee, Stephanie Garratt.

Assistant Presiding Judge George A. Miram, Supervising Judge Robert D. Foiles, and Commissioner Susan Greenberg oversaw this selection process. At the time of their selection, Assistant Presiding Judge Miram stated that the new commissioners will be exemplary judicial officers that “would treat litigants with fairness, patience, and respect.” The commissioners and referee will handle traffic, small claims and unlawful detainer (evictions) cases.

ONLINE TRAFFIC SERVICES

You can now pay your traffic ticket, request a continuance for traffic court, or sign-up for traffic school online. Each month, there has been a steady increase in the number of San Mateo County residents using this Internet service. We recently met with the San Mateo County Police Chiefs Association to discuss this new program. The Court and Police Chiefs agreed that we could spread the word about these services better by having each officer place a post-it note on each traffic citation, advising of the court's website and this convenient, Internet-based option. We are grateful to San Bruno Police Chief Lee Violett, the President of the Police Chiefs Association, and all county police chiefs for their help with this project. Like e-delivery, citizens' use of the Internet to take care of their court business is a valuable service. It helps you by reducing time spent driving to the courthouse and waiting in long lines. As with e-delivery, valuable staff time is saved, helping our budget significantly and this in turn helps all taxpayers. .



“Just wanted to let you know how much I loved using your automated web based traffic ticket payment/traffic school system. I know this may sound strange coming from someone who just paid for a speeding ticket, but it was extremely convenient and easy to use. I don't know who created the system, but they deserve kudos!”

- Traffic Litigant

JUROR OUTREACH PROGRAM

Our administration has made improving services to jurors its top priority. We have made significant progress in our goal. We meet with staff at least once a day to discuss the next day's need for jurors; as a result, we have significantly reduced the number of jurors we bring to the courthouse. We have improved the way we communicate with you, the prospective juror, by including a user-friendly letter with the juror summons. Additionally, we have improved the jury waiting room by placing computers in the room and providing free wireless Internet access for your laptop computers. We do this so that if you have to wait, you can utilize the time in a positive way to your benefit. Many jurors have remarked that this free service has allowed them to work remotely and take care of their business needs. Finally, when jurors are excused, either one of us will go to the jury room to thank the jurors for their participation. We want you to know that we value your commitment to this vital civil service.

Since we began this program in 2003, we have received a significant amount of positive feedback. We also recognize there is always room for improvement. We always welcome your comments and thoughts as to how we can do a better job. Please click on the webmaster link on the Court's website with your ideas and constructive suggestions regarding jury service.



“Thank you for the internet service (in the jury room) ... wireless is great!”

- Prospective juror

“From the letter that I received in my summons from Judges Forcum and Miram to the pleasant service I received from Ronnell and Shawna, I can clearly see that the Jury Commissioner's Office and the presiding judges are making the optimum effort to accommodate and respect the public's time and needs when it comes to jury service!”

- Prospective juror

COURT IN THE SCHOOLS DAYS

“The case study was excellent, exciting for the students and ripe with specific examples onto which they could grab. The judge was also terrific. I loved the visit and so did the students.”

- Derek DeNardo,
teacher
Sequoia High School

Our Court began its innovative Court in the Schools Day program two years ago. This unique program sends a Superior Court Judge to each of the schools in the San Mateo Union High School and Sequoia Union High School Districts to teach students about the Court system. Part of the curriculum involves an actual criminal case from San Mateo County to illustrate sentencing, victim impact, and evidentiary issues. The program has been extremely well received by students and teachers alike. We are happy to report that Court in the Schools Days will now occur twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring, to enable us to speak with all government high school seniors. This fall, the program will also be expanded to include Serra High School.



More than 2,000 students participated in this year's Court in the Schools Days

We are very grateful for the support that the school districts have given the Court in developing this project, particularly social studies coordinators Lee Swenson and Jim Smith (San Mateo Union High School District), Brandon Lee (Sequoia Union High School District), and Patrick Duggan (Serra High School). We are also grateful to Deputy District Attorney Elaine Tipton, who oversees the District Attorney's Office Community Outreach Efforts. Ms Tipton will be joining Judge Forcum at a number of schools this fall to add another perspective about the case study and the issues involved with it. The case study we use for this program can be found on the Court's website.

WWW.SANMATEOCOURT.ORG

The following are the members of the San Mateo Superior Court judiciary and the high schools they visited in May 2003.

Judge Bergeron	Sequoia
Judge Diaz	San Mateo
Judge Foiles	Aragon
Judge Forcum	Burlingame, Carlmont, Menlo-Atherton, San Mateo Middle College High School and Sequoia
Judge Freeman	Menlo-Atherton
Judge Holm	Sequoia
Judge Miram	Woodside
Judge Runde	Mills
Judge Weiner	Capuchino
Commissioner Greenberg	Peninsula

SCHOOL FIELDTRIPS TO THE COURTHOUSE

Our Court is very proud of its outreach program where students and their teachers come to the Courthouse to see actual trials, court proceedings, and the Bridges Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program. The program, developed by Presiding Judge Mark R. Forcum, Assistant Presiding Judge George A. Miram, and Supervising Judges Robert D. Foiles and Stephen M. Hall, has included students from Burlingame High School, Woodside High School, Mount Carmel, Saint Matthew's, Saint Gregory's, Foster City Junior High School and high school students studying at Stanford University during the summer.

If your school would like to visit the Courthouse and participate in this program, please contact either Presiding Judge Mark R. Forcum at 650-363-7835 or Community Outreach Coordinator Jill Selvaggio at 650-599-1519.

CONCLUSION

In January 2003, when our administration started, our goal was to provide the best possible, user-friendly service to you, the citizens of San Mateo County, with the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars. We believe that the many programs that we have developed and discussed above have achieved that goal. Our positive efforts to serve the community have been recognized by the State Judicial Council, in their most recent report that specifically commends our EZLegalFile program, Court in Schools Days, and juror service programs. As public servants, we will continue to build on these successes so that our Court always remains responsive to your needs.

Thank you for all of your help and support.

Mark R. Forcum
Presiding Judge

George A. Miram
Assistant Presiding Judge



"I really like the courthouse... because so many interesting things happen there, and because that's where people can find justice."

- Alex
5th grade

"Thank you for touring us around the courthouse! My favorite part was when we went into Judge Forcum's courtroom for Bridges. It was very interesting!"

- Zach
5th grade