



Counters to Courtrooms: Careers in the Fourth Judicial District

By Naomi Gooselaw, Human Resources Coordinator

The career opportunities in the court are as diverse as the community we serve and the people we employ. When people think of working in the legal system, they usually think of judges and attorneys, but opportunities abound beyond courtroom walls. In addition to 62 judges and 16 referees, our court has over 550 staff members and 250 volunteers who support the processing of over 800,000 cases each year. The possibilities range from entry level court clerks to the judicial district administrator. The court also offers a number of specialized careers, including court reporter and Guardian ad Litem. From counters to courtrooms, everyone who works in the court has an opportunity to provide a system of justice that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

The first point contact a person has with the court is usually a senior court clerk. Whether paying a fine in the Traffic Violations Bureau, seeking assistance at the Self Help Center or filing a will in Probate Court, a person accomplishes these tasks with the help of a senior court clerk. A large number of our employees belong to this classification. Staff at this level play a vital role in ensuring that cases are processed with accuracy and efficiency to ensure that our court customers are well-served. Their responsibilities vary by area and may include: processing traffic citation payments, entering court case information into the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), and reviewing legal documents presented for filing. Many senior court clerks provide critical courtroom support to judges and referees by preparing case files and forms, checking people in, calling the court calendar, and responding to requests for documents or information. Many parties, attorneys and outside agencies depend on the senior court clerks' expertise to answer questions and provide information on court policies and procedures.

A second important and specialized career available in the courts is that of a court reporter. Court reporters create a formal record of court proceedings – a function essential to our legal system. Using a stenographic computer or machine, the reporter captures all words spoken during court proceedings and then prepares transcripts which become the official record of the court case. These transcripts are then used for appeals, enforcing court orders, and answering questions about what happened in court. Although advanced technology has made it possible to provide electronic recording of some court proceedings, it is preferable to have an actual court reporter make the record of the proceedings. A growing shortage of qualified court reporters has emerged resulting in a great demand for them.

A third position, and one of the most unique, is the Guardian ad Litem. They are the eyes and ears of the court by advocating for and representing the best interests of a child in Family or

Juvenile Court. In order to do that, they complete a fact-finding investigation culminating in a report to the court. As part of the fact-finding, they review case files, conduct research, interview and observe the child at home and other settings, document the child's various interactions, and interview others involved in the case. Once the research is complete, they prepare written reports based on their findings and attend court hearings to make their recommendations to the Court. The Guardian ad Litem program offers a unique opportunity for paid staff positions and approximately 250 specially-trained community volunteers. For information about the Guardian ad Litem program, visit the Web site at <http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=109>.

Careers in over 100 different job classifications are available in the court – each with different skills and abilities needed. Regardless of their individual skills, all court employees have three things in common: a commitment to providing fair and equal access to justice, a desire for a meaningful career serving the public and the opportunity to make a difference in our community.

The Fourth Judicial District serving Hennepin County is committed to hiring a diverse work force that represents our community. To view current job openings, apply for or obtain more information on career opportunities in the court, visit the Web site at www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=1304.