

Circuit Court Welcomes New Judge

by *Kevin M. Oeffner*
Circuit Court Administrator

A new circuit court judge has been appointed to the judicial seat vacated by the retirement of Judge Gene Schnelz. On August 17 Shalina Kumar received a call from the governor's office announcing her appointment to the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court in Oakland County.

Judge Kumar took her seat on the bench on October 1. According to our records, she serves as the 65th circuit judge in Oakland County history.

For the past four years Judge Kumar served as a plaintiff's personal injury attorney with the firm of Weiner & Cox, P.L.C. in Southfield. She specialized in medical malpractice cases and gained considerable courtroom and trial experience as a result.

Preceding her employment with Weiner & Cox, Judge Kumar practiced in the area of plaintiff's personal injury with Sommers, Schwartz, Silver & Schwarz, P.C. in Southfield. Medical malpractice cases comprised the majority of her caseload. She served as a trial attorney and also handled depositions, mediations and negotiated settlements.

Judge Kumar also served with two other law firms early in her career where she specialized in civil and criminal defense and personal injury cases.

Judge Kumar attended the University of Michigan where she graduated with distinction, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology in 1993. She minored in sociology.

In 1993 Judge Kumar enrolled in law school at the University of Detroit – Mercy School of Law. She received her Juris Doctor in 1996, and shortly thereafter began her legal career as a sole practitioner specializing in criminal and civil law.

Public speaking is an activity that has interested Judge Kumar. She presents to groups on topics of law and has also been active in community concerns. She has served as a motivational speaker throughout metro Detroit, targeting her presentations to high school students and other youth groups.

The residents of Sylvan Lake elected Judge Kumar in 1997 to serve as a city councilperson. As an elected official for the city, she was active in legislative and policy-making concerns.

Judge Kumar is a member of the Oakland County Bar Association and has also been a member of the Women's Bar Association. For the past seven years she has served on the executive board of the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association.

In matters of particular interest to practitioners, Judge Kumar has been assigned to the Civil/Criminal Division and will take over the docket previously held by Judge

Schnelz. She will be located in Courtroom 1C, the same courtroom in which Judge Schnelz served.

Her criminal call will be at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesdays.

The judges and our employees congratulate Judge Kumar on her appointment and we welcome her to the Circuit Court family. We are confident that she will distinguish herself as a jurist and perform her new role admirably.

Let me switch gears for a moment before concluding. We have just introduced a new member of the judiciary, and now I want to recognize a jurist who has more than three decades of experience. This past August 22, Visiting Judge Charles Simon celebrated the 36th anniversary of his appointment as a circuit judge.

On August 22, 1971, Judge Simon was appointed to the 8th Circuit Court in Montcalm County by former Governor William Milliken. The 8th Circuit includes Montcalm and Ionia counties. Judge Simon served with distinction in the 8th Circuit Court for 28 years, leaving the bench at the end of 1998.

Judge Simon served as a visiting judge in the 17th Circuit Court in Kent County for much of 1999. In 2000 he accepted an invitation to serve as a visiting judge in Oakland County. He has primarily handled civil cases, settling many and presiding over trials for the rest. He ably handled a civil/criminal docket for a couple of months in 2003 when the assigned judge was recuperating from emergency surgery. Judge Simon filled in again this year by handling Judge Schnelz's docket subsequent to his retirement and while awaiting the appointment of our newest judge.

I couldn't let the 36th anniversary of Judge Simon's appointment to the judiciary go unmentioned. Thirty-six years as a jurist is a milestone that deserves recognition. It is a noteworthy achievement and it allows me an opportunity to express our thanks to Judge Simon for his exemplary service as visiting judge in our court.

Judge Kumar, congratulations on your appointment and we wish you well as you embark upon your judicial career. Judge Simon, thanks for so ably serving as a visiting judge and congratulations on 36 years.

Until next time...

