



2015 Annual Report



# Letter from the Presidents



Welcome to the Milwaukee Justice Center's 2015 Annual Report—an opportunity to share the MJC's story and emphasize its progress toward the goal of increasing access to justice in our community.

The MJC is a successful collaboration between the Milwaukee Bar Association Foundation, the Milwaukee County Clerk of Courts, and Marquette University Law School. Since 2009, the MJC has served over 65,500 individuals, utilizing 2,440 volunteers who have given 56,704 hours of free legal service at a value of over \$5 million – a significant expansion of services and corps of volunteers over six years.

Milwaukee faces a continued challenge as one of the most racially and economically segregated cities in the nation. Many of our fellow Milwaukee citizens face legal concerns that adversely impact their daily lives in the areas of family law, housing, small claims, and probate, without the benefit of legal counsel. Furthermore, because of severe budgetary pressures on existing legal aid organizations, many people are unable to obtain legal representation, even if eligible for the services, and they ultimately decide to represent themselves. These pro se litigants look to the MJC—at the courthouse and within the community through the Mobile Legal Clinic—for guidance in navigating the complex civil legal system.

We need your financial support for the MJC to continue to assist thousands of pro se civil litigants. When lawyers and other community members support the MJC, we collectively affirm the principle that meaningful access to justice, regardless of economic circumstances, is a civic necessity.

It is our honor to ask for your support in assuring that meaningful access to justice remain a reality in our community. Your donation to the MJC will help to satisfy the basic civil legal needs of some of the most vulnerable citizens in Milwaukee.

Please send your contribution to the Milwaukee Bar Association Foundation, 424 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202. You may also contribute online at the MJC's website: [www.MilwaukeeJusticeCenter.org](http://www.MilwaukeeJusticeCenter.org).



Marcia F. Drame  
MBA President



Francis W. Deisinger  
MBA Foundation President

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Number of volunteers: **445**    Hours donated: **12,760**    Clients helped: **10,090**

Value of service: **\$1,252,330**



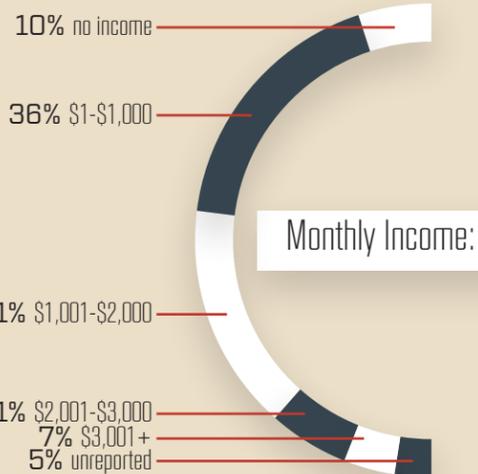
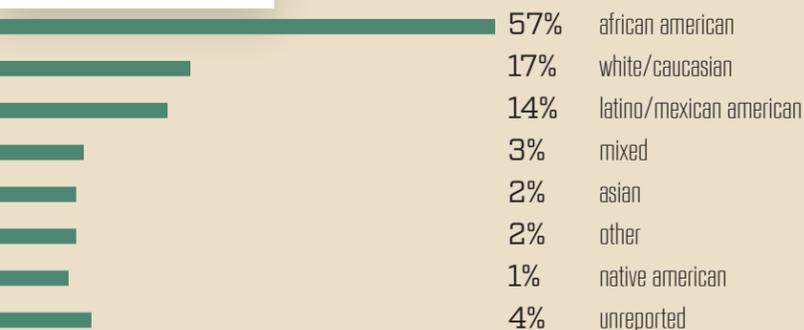
### Type of Service Provided

**7,038** walk-in forms    **2,223** brief legal advice clinic (MVLG at the MJC)    **787** part 2 divorce appointments    **187** mobile legal clinic    **42** parenting conferences

### MOST COMMON TOPICS

27% post-judgment family housing  
22% housing  
17% small claims

### Race/Ethnicity:



### Household Size:

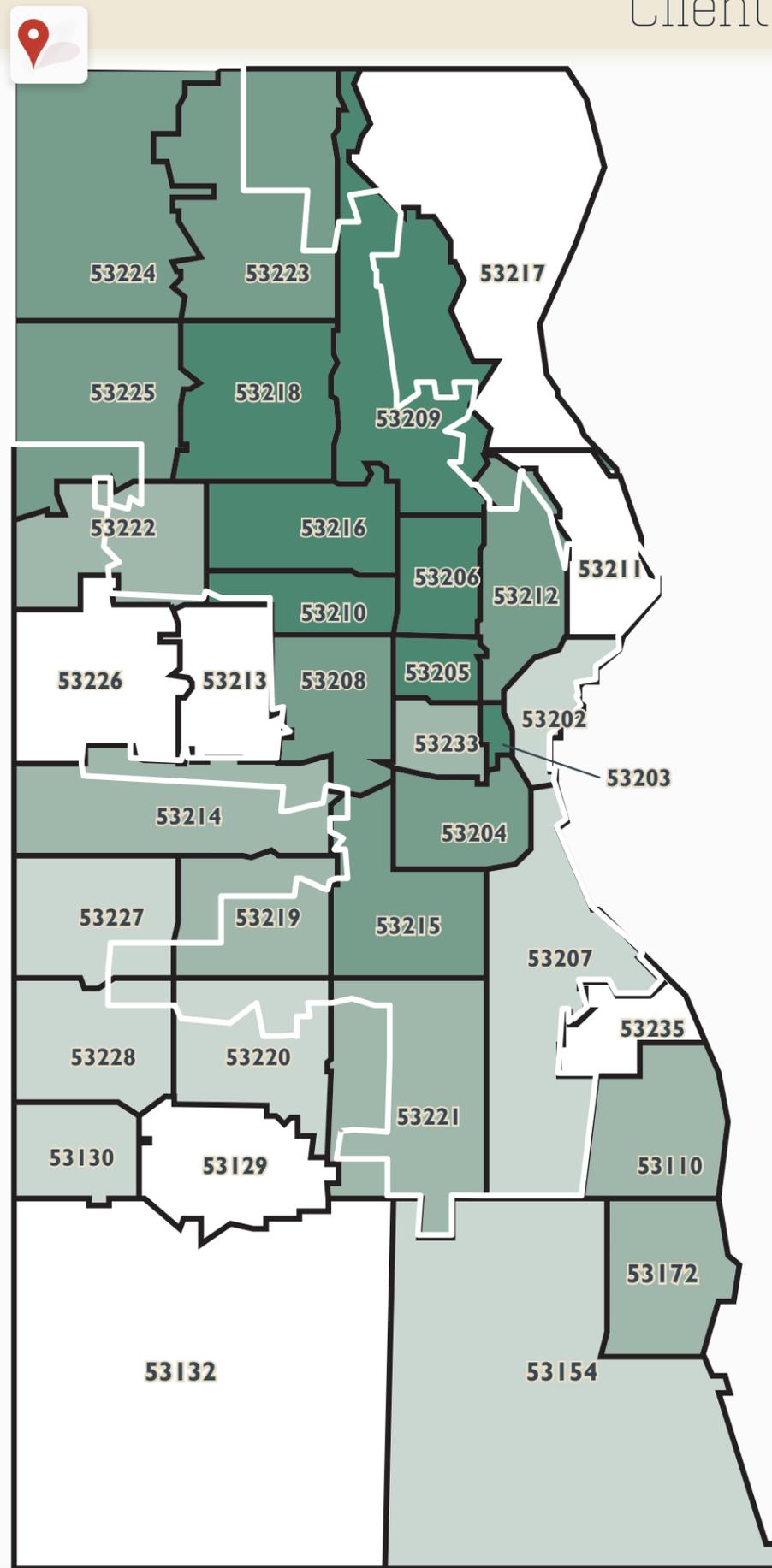


### Age:



### Gender:

43% male  
57% female



ZIP	NUMBER	VS. POP*
53206	512	1.82%
53203	17	1.82%
53205	178	1.77%
53218	712	1.75%
53216	564	1.75%
53210	471	1.68%
53209	769	1.64%
53208	450	1.45%
53212	397	1.31%
53225	331	1.29%
53224	271	1.27%
53204	513	1.21%
53223	306	1.05%
53215	632	1.04%
53233	134	0.81%
53222	194	0.77%
53214	260	0.75%
53221	216	0.57%
53219	187	0.55%
53110	98	0.54%
53172	111	0.53%
53227	120	0.52%
53220	122	0.46%
53207	149	0.42%
53202	89	0.38%
53228	53	0.37%
53130	27	0.35%
53154	112	0.33%
53213	71	0.27%
53235	24	0.26%
53129	34	0.24%
53226	43	0.23%
53211	75	0.21%
53132	61	0.18%
53217	49	0.17%
Outside MKE Co.	463	

\*Population information based on 2010 US Census data by Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA). Per the US Census Bureau, ZCTAs are generalized areal representations of US Postal Service Zip Code service areas. See more at: <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/zctas.html>



## 2015 MOBILE LEGAL CLINIC

CLINICS:	21
CLIENTS SEEN:	187
ATTORNEY VOLUNTEERS:	54
ATTORNEY HOURS:	145.5
STUDENT VOLUNTEERS:	77
STUDENT HOURS:	188.25
INTERNS:	10
INTERN HOURS:	30

VALUE OF SERVICE: **\$57,832**

## OUR LOCATION PARTNERS

- Agape Community Center
- Destiny Youth Plaza
- Islamic Da'Wa Center
- Journey House
- Milwaukee Public Library - Forest Home
- Muslim Community Health Center
- Oliver Wendell Holmes School
- St. Benedict the Moor Parish
- St. John's Lutheran Church West
- VA Community Resource & Referral Center
- West Side Academy
- YMCA - Parklawn
- Upcoming 2016 Plans
  - Monthly Saturday clinics throughout Milwaukee
  - Monthly Clinics at St. John's & St. Ben's
  - Partner with Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative



## 2015 PARENTING CONFERENCES

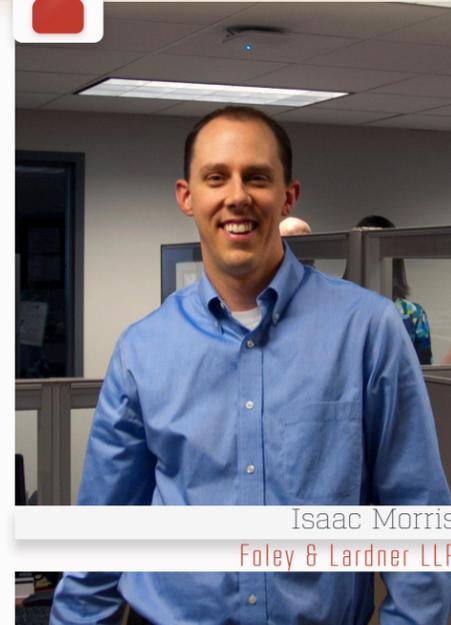
CONFERENCES CONDUCTED:	41
ATTORNEY VOLUNTEERS:	9
STUDENT/PARALEGAL VOLUNTEERS:	5
FULL AGREEMENT STIPULATIONS:	15
AGREEMENT MADE PRIOR:	4
ONE PARTY ATTENDED:	12
CANCELLED:	4
NO CALL/NO SHOW:	6

This new collaboration with the Milwaukee County Child Support Services, Quarles & Brady LLP, and Marquette Law School offers a dispute resolution option to parents who want to discuss issues of child support, custody, and placement.

Attorney facilitators, assisted by students, moderate a settlement conference with a goal to help the parties come to a stipulated agreement.



Kathleen Murphy  
Milwaukee Child Support Services



Isaac Morris  
Foley & Lardner LLP

A colleague of mine recommended the Milwaukee Justice Center as a great place to give back in a way that accommodated a busy schedule. Because the MJC is a brief legal advice clinic, I know that I will be assisting a number of individuals or families, but that the representation is not ongoing, for the most part.

That provides great benefits to both the clients and the attorneys. It encourages clients to come because they know they can receive assistance, and it encourages the attorneys to come because they know what kind of time to set aside.

The staff, attorneys, and volunteers at the MJC work very hard and

demonstrate a lot of devotion to the community. There are attorneys from all walks of life and from both sides of the political aisle.

The student volunteers deserve special mention, and I've worked with a number of them who are truly outstanding. I walk in feeling good, and I leave feeling even better.

Atty. Isaac Morris

"I expected to learn a little about the justice system. I learned a lot, and also met some incredible people. It solidified the idea that I want to serve people by increasing access to justice."

Hannah Koller  
Marquette University Sophomore

"I came in not really knowing what to expect. I learned people can, and often do, represent themselves in Milwaukee County. I had no idea before doing this internship that people did not need to hire a lawyer in order to file for divorce."

Holly Renta  
Milwaukee Area Technical College

"I learned there is more than one way to understand and help others. I think the MJC has done a great job helping others, and should continue doing what they are doing. Working with the MJC staff, you see the caring and concern that they have for clients."

Tiffany Tucker  
Bryant & Stratton College

"The MJC is a necessary resource for the community. Many of the clients look to you as their only hope. It felt rewarding to have the opportunity to assist them through the legal process."

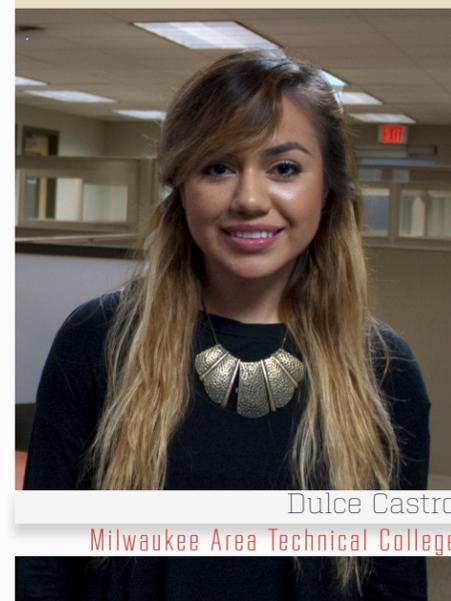
Megan Crowley  
Milwaukee Area Technical College

"This experience exceeded my expectations by a long shot. I have learned much more than I ever imagined, and have loved helping people that don't have the resources to solve the problems they have."

Taylor Harrison  
Marquette University Sophomore

"I really appreciate the MJC's efforts on providing free help when dealing with family law situations. I wish we could have more services like this in courthouses, because having everything in one place is useful."

Shivani Chokshi  
Marquette University 2L



Dulce Castro  
Milwaukee Area Technical College

My career path has changed from wanting to be an immigration lawyer because, before, I never would have thought about family law. Now, I know more about how family and immigration law go together, and how it can make a big change for someone else.

Dulce Castro

Helping out the people who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford an attorney, or know how to navigate the system has been rewarding. Filing all these motions and forms can be difficult. And it's a great way to get legal experience while I'm searching for a job in the field.

Jon Allen



Jon Allen  
Milwaukee Area Technical College

**K**atrina knew she shouldn't have left her apartment the way she did. However, she was younger, and wasn't as familiar with how renting an apartment works as she is now.

"I signed a lease, but I didn't stay the full year," Katina said. "I moved out. It was my first time ever renting a place. But then I tried to get another place on my own and through that, I found out that I had this eviction on my record."

Katina said she was never notified about the procedure, was never served paperwork, but that the blemish on her record was preventing her from finding another place to live.

"I'm an assertive person," Katina said. "So I Googled how to deal with an eviction, and the Milwaukee Justice Center popped up, so I clicked on it, and I called. They told me I would need an interpreter, and set one up for me to help."

In addition to needing legal advice, Katina required the help of an American Sign Language interpreter.

The Milwaukee Justice Center collaborated with the Milwaukee County Interpreter Services to request assistance for Katina's meeting with the volunteer attorney.

"I was not expecting all this help today," Katina said. "I was overwhelmed today before I came in, and I was overwhelmed with the help I got. I wasn't expecting it and I feel blessed."

The attorney advised Katina on what she could do, she called her former landlord on her behalf and explained the situation to him. Ultimately she was able to get the landlord to agree to reduce Katina's fees and clear the eviction off her record.

"So not only did she use all her power and sweetness to try and help resolve my situation, I also learned a lot about the law and my responsibilities," Katina said. "I want to be an honest person and take care of my responsibilities, but I still want to be able to find future housing."



Katina  
Timmermann West

**M**arie originally came to the Milwaukee Justice Center in order to get her divorce filed.

"I came down and I didn't have a long wait," Marie started, gushing. "Everybody was courteous and kind, and they helped me do part one of my divorce. Then I came back and they helped me with part two, and got me in quickly. One of the interns helped me do Part Two, the people at the counter were so helpful and kind and courteous. Even the judge was kind and helpful."

Originally from Yazoo City, Mississippi, Marie came to Milwaukee in the 1980s seeking a better life for her and her kids.

"I was in Mississippi and I had three kids to raise," Marie said. "The funding, the programs, they didn't have like Wisconsin had. I wanted to raise myself up to where I could go to school and get a job. I worked on and off in temporary jobs in the 80s and 90s, even here at the courthouse and the Metro Milwaukee Sewerage

District."

In May of 2015, Marie graduated from Bryant & Stratton College's Medical Administrative Assistant program, and started work at a doctor's office the next month.

"My divorce, I just can't do anything but thank the Lord for it, and everyone here who made this possible," Marie said. "I just thank God for all the donations and contributions to this program. It's a good program, a helpful program."

Marie says next in her plans are to move to South Carolina next year, for the weather, and to be close to family.

"My body does not like Wisconsin anymore. Especially the winters. All of my kids have moved back down south. I'm originally from Mississippi, and my son is in South Carolina, so I'm going to move back down south with my son," Marie said. "And I'm going to crochet. Hats, scarves, blankets...I've been learning how to do everything YouTube has."



Marie  
King Park

**C**heresse came in for help with a custody and placement issue with her children.

"Me and my son's father...there was a domestic violence issue," Cheresse said. "After that, he disappeared, and my son has been with me for the past year. I needed to get placement changed officially, so I filed the motion and had him served. That's when he took my son."

Cheresse said she called Milwaukee police for them to help, and that this wasn't the first time they'd been here for placement help.

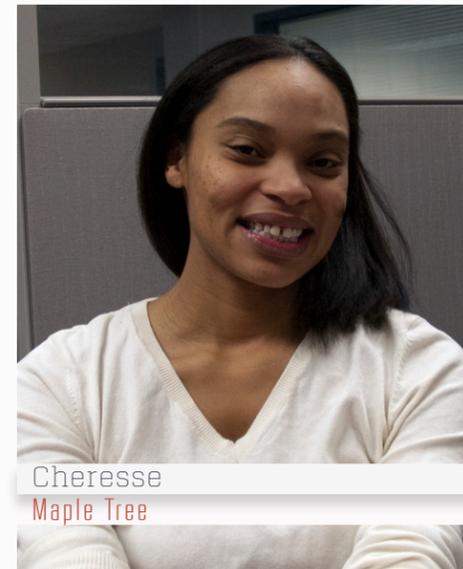
"We were in court previously in 2014 to fix this," Cheresse said. "But I had to drop the case at the time

because I couldn't keep paying for an attorney."

When she came to the Milwaukee Justice Center, she got help from one of the experienced family law attorneys during our family law advice clinic. She says the attorney helped explain her current orders to her, and told her what she could do going forward. He then referred her to get help filling out the forms.

"I'm so...I'm smiling now," Cheresse blushed. "I'm hopeful. I'm so hopeful. The attorney told me more than my old lawyer did. It gets difficult when you're doing it by yourself."

Cheresse said her son is with her now, and she's setting a court date.



Cheresse  
Maple Tree

"They're service was exceptional, and they were great with providing me very knowledgeable legal counsel. I went to the [MJC] and I would refer anyone who asks if I know of good legal advice. Thank you for everything!"

Joseph  
Historic Mitchell Street

"The student and the volunteer were both very helpful. If it wasn't for the help and kindness we received, we would be stuck in the problems we have."

Kenneth  
Morgandale

"This service was awesome. I would definitely recommend anyone come here."

Kayla  
Lindsey Park

"The service was great, the volunteers were very helpful and thoughtful. The volunteers went over and beyond to sort out my problems, and lead me in the right direction. They were also very kind and worked pretty fast"

Shawn  
Williamsburg Heights

"The information given was quite informative and helpful to me. I feel that I gained more insightful knowledge as to how to fill out the forms for my claim. Excellent job!"

Dorothy  
Rufus King

"This is a good place to start whenever you need to take legal action. It's good to know what you need to know. You've been so helpful."

Cynthia  
Glendale



Derrick  
Capitol Heights

**D**errick's apartment home was damaged in a fire that would become fatal for one of his neighbors. In addition, while he was trying to evacuate the building, Derrick got hurt.

"I messed up my ankle and my back trying to get out," Derrick said. "I fell down eight or nine steps."

Derrick said it was a chaotic situation, especially given his proximity to where the fire started...just across the hall from his door.

"My landlord said grab everything and get out of the building! I got out of the building as quickly as I could," Derrick said. "I had my pants in my hand, I had my house shoes on, I had

my coat, and my cane."

His brother-in-law was able to come and take him to the emergency room to get looked at. He said injured his ankle and had a lot of bruising from the fall.

Derrick said he came to the MVLC at the MJC to see if he had a claim for the fall.

"Other lawyers didn't want to get involved because I tripped. Of course I tripped! I was trying to get out of the fire!" Derrick said. "You guys helped me out. I feel excellent now, and everything is falling into place. You guys are superb!"

Derrick is recovering in his home that only experienced smoke damage.



Hon. Mary Kuhnmuench  
Branch 5

The Hon. Mary M. Kuhnmuench is serving her second rotation in the Milwaukee County Circuit Court's Family Division. She previously served in family from 2005-2009, right as the Milwaukee Justice Center was starting to take shape under Atty. Amy Wochos (now Senior Administrator to Milwaukee County Clerk of Circuit Court John Barrett) and Anna Hodges (now Barrett's Civil Division Administrator).

"I come from the days of my clerk standing outside with these self-represented litigants at a desk helping people fill out their paperwork," Judge Kuhnmuench said, reflecting on her first rotation on the family bench. "It was a tsunami! People throwing

paperwork at us saying 'help me!'" During this time, she says, she set a personal record of presiding over nine divorces in a single day. "I didn't have a voice left at the end of the day," she recalls. But in July 2016, she matched that record, and said it was completely different from the last time.

"Of the nine couples I divorced the other day, six were self-represented... and they were *flawless*," Judge Kuhnmuench said emphatically. "They were prepared, they had all their paperwork filled out correctly, they understood what was needed to be done. They all got assistance from the Milwaukee Justice Center. That is a seismic change

from my first rotation in Family."

"To see, seven years after I last served in Family, what we have in the MJC, a pulsating, active, very busy, very well-staffed, well-equipped legal center is a miracle," she continued. "It was so needed, and over a seven-year period of time from having nothing to this full-service operation is a testimony to our entire justice system here in Milwaukee."

Judge Kuhnmuench was first elected to the bench in 1998, and was most recently re-elected in the 2016 spring elections. She says she loves being a trial judge, so much so she is the current president of the Wisconsin Trial Judges Association.

"We trial judges are on the front lines of all the messiness, the tragedies, and the difficulties that come up in people's lives," she said. "It never ceases to amaze me, when you ask a couple if their marriage is irretrievably broken, it always elicits emotional responses, tears, from both husband and wife. For them to admit that out loud is very emotional."

However, she says one of the benefits of the MJC is being able to reduce the amount of emotional pain involved in Family Court, as divorcing couples most often complete the process on their first pre-trial hearing. "That just simply did not happen before." ●

To see, seven years after I served in Family, what we have in the MJC, a well-staffed, well-equipped legal center, is a miracle.



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