

In The Spotlight with: Medina County's Public Defender, Jocelyn Stefancin

By Kate Feeks

Jocelyn Stefancin, will be on *Law Talk* with host John Celebrezze to discuss her position as Medina County's Public Defender. This show will run throughout the month of June on Wadsworth Cable (WCTV) Public Access Channel 15, Brunswick Area Television (BAT) Public access Channel 21, and Armstrong Cable Access Channel 37 in Medina County along with Clear Picture Channels 21 & 22 in Wooster and Massillon.

Jocelyn Stefancin graduated from Washington & Jefferson College in 1987, with degrees in psychology and political science. Ms. Stefancin attended the Case Western Reserve School of Law in Cleveland, Ohio, and received her Juris Doctorate in May of 1990. She was admitted to the practice of law in November 1990.

Ms. Stefancin began her career in Cleveland Ohio with a small general practice firm. In 1992 she accepted a position with the Wayne County Prosecutor's office. She remained with that office through 2007. In 2008 Ms. Stefancin joined the office of the Morrow County Prosecuting Attorney, and continued working with that office until February of 2013, when she accepted her current position.

The Medina Public Defender's Office began functioning in 2004. It was created to provide legal representation to indigent clients. This office represents clients in Medina Municipal and Juvenile Courts. "Everyone charged with a crime which there's a potential punishment, such as incarceration, is entitled to be represented by counsel. If they can't afford representation then the court will provide representation for them." Stefancin said.

A client is determined indigent according to guidelines that are set forth through the Ohio State Public Defender's office. "Each year we get the guidelines updated based on the poverty level, so anyone who meets or falls below the poverty guidelines set by the federal government is eligible for our services. For a single person the guideline is \$412.00 a week." explained Stefacin.

In the absence of a public defender's office, the court would appoint a private attorney for an individual client. This can still happen when there are conflicts with co-defendants involved. Because the office can only represent one of the co-defendants, the other individual(s) have appointed private counsel.

Stefacin's vision for the Medina County Public Defender's office is to build its reputation. She would like it to be seen as a valuable asset to the community that provides an excellent defense for its clients. "That is one of the things that I strive to do.", she said. I plan to build our reputation in a number of ways. Some ways are to ensure the office is equipped with current computer hardware and software, and make sure my attorneys are adequately trained. "Public defenders are, in fact, licensed attorneys, that practice in the courts every day. I want to get the public aware of what we do and the services we provide. "Slowly but surely I think we will bring awareness." she said.

To learn more about Medina County's Public Defender watch for the interview with Ms. Jocelyn Stefancin and Mr. Celebrezze throughout the month of June on *Law Talk* .