

## **In The Spotlight with: Judge Joyce V. Kimbler, Medina County Common Pleas Court**

By Kate Feeks

Judge Joyce V. Kimbler appeared on the show *Law Talk* with host John Celebrezze to discuss her first year as a Medina County Common Pleas Court Judge. This show will run throughout the month of January on Wadsworth Cable (WCTV) Public Access Channel 15, Brunswick Area Television (BAT) Public access Chanel 21, and Armstrong Cable Access Channel 37 in Medina County along with Clear Picture Channels 21 & 22 in Wooster and Massillon.

Judge Joyce Kimbler graduated from Springfield Township High School in 1971 and went on to the Evangel College graduating *magna cum laude* in 1975 with a degree in psychology. After her graduation from the University of Akron School of Law, she was licensed as an Ohio attorney in November of 1982. She worked in private practice and as a judicial attorney for the Ninth District Court of Appeals before joining Nationwide Insurance Company in December of 1985. She spent 29 years with Nationwide as a trial attorney before retiring in December of 2014. During that time she participated in about 100 jury trials, handled over 50 appellate cases and argued 5 cases before the Ohio Supreme Court. She has practiced in both state and federal courts throughout Ohio. In November of 2014 she was elected as a judge for the Medina County Court of Common Pleas General Division. She assumed that position on January 1, 2015.

Kimbler became interested in running for judge because she is a true believer of the system. “I love watching a jury at work. I believe it is the most basic example of our democracy in action. I love the presumption of innocence and the right not to incriminate yourself. Whether it's a civil trial or a criminal trial I love to see good attorneys in action bringing forth the strengths and weaknesses of the case and then turning it over to a jury for determination. It is America at its best, utilizing the system to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner. Juries and voting are the core principles of democracy. As a judge, I can bring the values of our community into the courtroom to ensure the fair administration of justice.” Kimbler said.

Kimbler explained that her first year in her new position has been a year of tremendous learning opportunities. Starting with new judge school in December 2014, she has had the opportunity to attend numerous sessions put on by the Ohio Judicial College, including one on how to handle a capital murder trial. She also attended the National Drug Court conference in Washington D.C. During that first year the court had to undergo re-certification for both the Mental Health and Drug Court dockets. The court has also seen 5 civil jury trials and 9 criminal jury trials. At any given time there are about 500 pending cases with the criminal cases requiring the most time and resources because of their volume and speedy trial constraints. “To date, criminal indictments are up over 2014, probably due primarily to the rise in heroin use.” Kimbler noted.

When Kimbler took over the bench, Courtroom No. 2 had state certified Mental Health Court and Drug Court dockets. Both had to be re certified. “I like the name of these specialty courts. They are referred to as problem solving courts. They are devised to identify specific problems that lead to the anti-social behavior with the goal of helping the offender overcome the problem and not re-offend. Statistically, these courts both reduce recidivism and are cost effective. They are based upon principles and practices developed based on research by the University of Cincinnati. When a court is reviewed by representatives of the Ohio Supreme Court they are looking for very specific practices such as the number of positive comments you give versus negative comments. (4:1 ratio is the goal). In a meeting following our certification inspection, it was suggested that in 2016 our court could become a mentor court and a certified medically assisted treatment court.” explained Kimbler with pride.

For the upcoming year Kimbler plans to focus on the Drug and Mental Health Courts. “Now that we are a fully certified mental health and drug court it is our goal to expand the programs to allow more offenders to participate and to apply to become a mentor court and a medically assisted treatment court.” Kimbler said.

Judge Kimbler resides in Seville, Ohio with her husband, retired Judge James L. Kimbler, and her adult children.

