

Tribute to Chief Judge Karen S. Jennemann
By: Lee Ann Bennett, Clerk of Court

As “editor-in chief,” Chief Judge Karen S. Jennemann, launched this newsletter in February 2012. Thus, it is only fitting that the lead article this quarter be a tribute to her!

On October 1, 2011, Judge Jennemann was appointed by the District Court as Chief Judge for the Middle District of Florida Bankruptcy Court. She approached this new role as she does most new adventures: with great thoughtfulness. Months before assuming her role, Judge Jennemann took time to reflect on the Court and her vision for the future of our Court. She embarked upon a “listening tour,” spending numerous hours visiting with each member of the Court, including judges and Court staff, with local attorneys and bar leaders, and with judges and leaders of District Court and Circuit Court. From this listening tour, Judge Jennemann developed her vision for our Court, a vision of a District-led court rather than a Division-led court.

Judge Jennemann had the foresight to realize that, due to budgetary challenges, the Court would have difficulty thriving as a Division-led court. She also envisioned a court that would be better able to meet the needs of the legal community through uniform procedures that make it easier for attorneys and their staff to practice in any division of the Middle District.

Judge Jennemann realized that communication would be the key to successfully making the change to District-wide thinking. Each year since her appointment, she has conducted a State of the District address for the bar associations of each Division, followed by a State of the District address to Court staff. In her first article in this newsletter, Judge Jennemann shared with us her vision of thinking District-wide. She understood with all parties, judges, staff and lawyers working together, we could accomplish great things.

As we approach the end of Judge Jenneman’s term as Chief Judge, we celebrate the accomplishments achieved under her leadership. A partial list includes:

- A Court mission statement setting forth our values and goals
- Court newsletter
- Formation of Steering Committee, whose members have offered input on uniform procedures for adversary proceedings, stay procedures, reaffirmation agreement, 2004 examinations, and Chapter 13 procedures
- District (and Statewide) residential mortgage modification mediation procedures developed at a statewide Mediation Summit
- Permissive District-wide negative notice list
- Permissive submission of proposed orders
- Self-calendaring by trustees and noticing of hearings by attorneys

Improved external website (winning a “Top 10 Court Website Award”)
Improved training of staff, with training off-sites held each year since 2012
Internal procedure manual, which includes 56 uniform procedures
External procedure manual (soon to be published)
Formation of Court staff committees to improve processes, outreach, and communication
IT advancements including eOrders, local modifications in CM/ECF, and improved ability to work across division lines
Bench-Bar annual meetings to discuss various procedures
Improved *pro bono* services through *pro se* clinics in Orlando, Jacksonville and Tampa

Judge Jennemann stayed the course, reminding us often of the reason to push towards uniformity and District-wide thinking. She understands the importance of planning for the future and embracing change. She listened, she cared, and she acted because of her love for this COURT.

Judge Jennemann, on behalf of the judges, the staff, and legal community of our Court, we thank you!