

A New Chapter

By Sheryl Loesch, Clerk of Court

As the new Bankruptcy Clerk of Court, I want to acknowledge my longtime friend and colleague, Lee Ann Bennett, for the legacy she left behind. As nationally known, the Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Florida is one of the largest courts in the nation, yet also one of the most efficient. This reputation is because of the exceptional quality of judges on the bench and the collegiality and collaboration they enjoy in conjunction with Lee Ann's leadership, business acumen, and talent.

During Lee Ann's leadership, the bankruptcy court fell upon hard times when caseloads began to fall and staffing levels were adversely affected. Tough decisions had to be made and creative ways of doing more with less (I prefer to say "doing everything with nothing") were needed. Lee Ann was never one to shy away from a challenge and encouraged her staff to find new ways to become more efficient so the business of the court would not suffer. Under Lee Ann's leadership, the court emerged from the "bad times" to what has become the new normal, a much smaller bankruptcy staff footprint.

The thought of trying to fill Lee Ann's shoes was daunting to me. After all, my nearly 29-year career with the federal judiciary was in the world of the district court, and aside from being familiar with bankruptcy appeals, I have never worked in the area of bankruptcy. The transition from district to bankruptcy court was eased thanks to the highly qualified and skilled staff Lee Ann assembled. Moving to the bankruptcy court was a big change for me, but I am excited about the opportunity to meet and work with new people.

It is normal for people to be nervous or even intimidated by change, but I believe change is good and can be a positive in one's life. This change was not just about me, it was a big change for the bankruptcy judges, the bankruptcy staff, and all who were used to working with Lee Ann. I am sure the staff wondered what kind of leader I would be and if I would make changes to office policies and practices. The big challenge for me is to earn the trust and respect from others who have never met me before.

I am excited about the new path my career has taken. I could not work with a more professional, dedicated group of people who consider themselves to be a team. I could not ask for a better work environment.

To help those of you who don't know me well, I would like to share with you a little bit about myself from the "non-work" perspective. I have sensed the court family is

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pro pet. So let me tell you about mine. I have a fur child named Gibbs, who is a Samoyed. He is an AKC champion. And I actually showed him in the ring! His AKC registered name really is Special Agent N.C.I.S. “Gibbs,” but unlike the real Gibbs, my Gibbs is rule adverse. My hobby is photography, especially travel photography, and I enjoy travel of all kinds. I’ve been involved in numerous rule-of-law programs around the world and have had the privilege of visiting some very off-the-beaten-path countries to assist their judiciaries, who wish to model their system of justice after ours, which is the gold standard of the world.

I look forward to working with the bankruptcy community for years to come, and I cannot thank each of you enough for making me feel so welcome and already a part of the bankruptcy court family here in the Middle District of Florida.

