



## **FLMB's Outreach Committee and Virtual Staff Activities Play Starring Role in Recent FJC Program**

By Honorable Catherine Peek McEwen

As part of the Federal Judicial Center's annual Workshop for Bankruptcy Judges, I was to host a roundtable discussion in Philadelphia this month on Community Outreach. The FJC typically holds one program in the west and one in the east. My counterpart for the western program, which was to be held in Santa Fe in April, is Judge Sandy Klein, a big supporter of community outreach in various forms in her home bankruptcy court in Los Angeles.

As Judge Klein and I started to prepare together in the Fall of last year, I bragged to her about our Court's active Outreach Committee and all the good works and camaraderie-creating events it has done over the years. And I suggested we profile some of its initiatives for use at our respective venues. To that end, I asked Nita Balames, a long-time and tireless member of the Outreach Committee, to research and come up with a visual presentation that I could use as a handout. She enlisted the help of Sara Mason and Anel Merritt who provided valuable technical and creative support. Together, they created a slick booklet of pictures and text that could serve as a model for other courts who would like to engage in community outreach but are not doing so presently. A copy of the booklet is appended to this article for all to enjoy (and for our "customers" to learn about the good deeds done). The booklet covers both internal outreach initiatives as well as what one might more typically think of as outreach, external initiatives. I looked forward to having Judge Klein share the booklet in Santa Fe and my crowing about it in Philly.

And then came COVID-19. Beginning in March, every big gathering anywhere in the United States was postponed indefinitely or canceled—the FJC Workshop in both venues included. Yet we had this lovely deliverable, the booklet, that should not go to waste!

So when the FJC tossed out the notion (bait?) that the Workshop faculty could do some of the sessions virtually, I asked Judge Klein if she was game. Of course, she was, and I knew she would be. Thus, the booklet would not go to waste after all! And we became the first session of the Workshop to be offered virtually, last month.

Our FJC virtual Community Outreach program needed a few tweaks from what we had planned for the in-person discussions because we had to shift our emphasis to activities that could now be done virtually or in small groups. Judge Klein and I highlighted judicial initiatives to the community at large that we had undertaken or that we knew of which could be re-tooled to a virtual platform and video or on a smaller scale. And we also highlighted internal outreach efforts, primarily focusing on our Court's Outreach Committee's events, as displayed in the booklet. We brought the booklet up on the screen, and I turned the pages electronically for all the attendees to see. By the time of the presentation, we had also gathered other examples of internal outreach in a pandemic setting, in the form of virtual staff meetings and activities. I was proud, again, to display to other judges around the nation our teleworking workout challenge and the staff scavenger hunt and pictures of the results (see the "Staying Connected While Social Distancing" article in this newsletter edition).

The FJC is going to post our program, which was recorded, and its handouts, including our Court's Community Outreach committee's booklet, on the FJC website to reach judges who could not attend the live presentation.

Now that the show is over, I invite our Court's Outreach Committee, present and alums, to a curtain call. Take a virtual bow. We judges are proud of your creativity and work, and we are proud that your work is now an example to other federal courts.

Please click [here](#) to view the Outreach Booklet.