



More Challenges Ahead...

By: Sheryl Loesch, Clerk of Court

With COVID “somewhat” behind us, the Middle District of Florida Bankruptcy Court continues to face challenges ahead. As if surviving the last two years wasn’t difficult enough, we now face the largest budget cut we’ve faced in a long time. Between now and the end of the fiscal year (September 30, 2022), we must reduce our staffing levels in order to operate with a \$1.3 million reduction to our “salaries account,” which takes effect October 1. So a number of our case managers have elected to retire. Not only is it sad to see these long-time, dedicated employees leave, but they also leave with a wealth of operational knowledge that will be dearly missed. The Court now faces a big question: “Where do we go from here?”

Our Court has always been at the forefront of innovating and developing technical efficiencies. This past year, we experienced a number of impactful changes to our operations. We transitioned to the new national case management system, NextGen, back in November. We also implemented a new cash register program, and we fully implemented remote court proceeding capabilities in all courthouses. This was all done during the pandemic.

More recently, our financial staff has undertaken the long-awaited process of paying the Chapter 7 Trustees for cases falling under the Bankruptcy Administration Improvement Act (BAIA). Our Court has more than 10,000 eligible cases for payments to be processed but only two financial staff members to handle these payments.

To say we are doing “more with less” is an understatement. I like to say we are now doing “everything with nothing.” This will become more apparent as we face the loss of a number of our hard-working and valued staff members. I want to thank all our trustees and attorneys who practice in our court for their support and patience as we face a time of dramatically reduced staff.

As is the case with every dire scenario, we try to see the lemonade instead of the lemons, and we know that our office will continue to provide the exemplary level of service everyone has been accustomed to. Our staff will still have smiles on their

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faces, and they will exhibit a “can do” attitude, because that is the type of staff we have. I am so proud of them.

To those staff who will be retiring, I know everyone joins me in wishing you all the best in this new phase of life and also in thanking you for a job well done and a career that I hope you are proud to have had because you certainly have made a difference in this world!

Let's all hope for a sunnier and happier rest of the year and in the year to come!