

## **Let's look beyond the courthouse bricks**

Bob Kramer

### **THROUGH MY EYES**

I was really jealous when I first visited the new Mason municipal building and justice center. The big bucks police department and courthouse is one that any small town would be proud of and droll over ... or would they? Yes, our building in Fairfield has been convicted of being overcrowded and out of date. It really was a slam-dunk case for the prosecution. Fortunately, our current building has been sentenced to oblivion. We have even brought justice to our justice center by finally agreeing to give it the place of prominence it deserves in downtown Fairfield. However, going back to the Mason comparison, we already have a center of justice that one must be very proud of if you look beyond the bricks. I have observed Judge Joyce Campbell at work during many court sessions. She makes me smile and feel proud at the same time. I also have observed Judge George Parker in Mason. He also makes me smile and even more proud of our own Judge Joyce. Judge Campbell is caring. She treats everyone with respect. She does her best to put defendants at ease, especially the first timers. She does this with both genuine kindness and a gentle sense of humor. I encourage all of you in Echo land to drop in on a court session and observe for yourself. Thursdays are best, since this is when contested cases are held. Judge Campbell makes our outdated center shine with the legacy that she has created for our city. I hate to keep comparing Fairfield to Mason, but it is only by comparison that one can really appreciate what we have. Search the news sources for Judge Joyce Campbell and compare what you learn with the results of a search for Judge George Parker, the Mason municipal court judge. You will be proud to learn that Fairfield is the second city in all of Ohio to establish a Treatment Alternative Court for defendants with mental health problems. Again this is a testament to the genuine effort that our judge has to administer justice tempered with compassion. "I have seen a need in this court to address what I call the frequent fliers, people who keep coming back, whose behaviors as a result of their mental illness were being criminalized," she said. "These people who can't help themselves, it is important to get them out of the criminal justice system." Now Grandma always said if you can't say anything nice about someone don't say anything at all. Out of respect for Grandma I will simply quote from my research to make my case but our justice center is far superior to Mason's if you look beyond the bricks. In my search for news on Judge George Parker I learned many things. First of all, he makes the news very, very often compared with our low profile humble judge. He made lots of headlines for his involvement with the Conese brothers. That sordid story has been beat to death, so I will let it rest. Judge Parker made headlines when he acquitted a middle-aged psychologist of an assault charge for pulling down a 14-year-old girl's pants and spanking her hard enough to cause bruises. He made headlines when Mason's city council refused to pay for six of the nine new positions he requested for the municipal court. I even heard that he had requested a 24-hour bodyguard. Judge Parker made headlines a few weeks ago when it was reported that Ohio Highway Patrol troopers operating in his jurisdiction cut down ticket writing from 652 tickets to 170. Judge Parker said that he had heard that his outspoken style might play a role. Hey, maybe so. Yes, I am very proud of the quality of our justice in Fairfield, and two judges make it so.

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