

SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES' ASSOCIATION 2019 ANNUAL SPRING MEETING REPORT

Equality and Fairness Committee

COMMITTEE

Judge Helen Whitener

CHAIR

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES SINCE LAST REPORT

Standing Committees Within Equality and Fairness:

Media & Outreach – The Committee put a lot of time and effort in establishing its web presence through the SCJA's website, under the Equality and Fairness Committee. Judge Jackie Shea-Brown worked with the SCJA's webmaster and the SCJA Outreach Committee to upload the E&F Committee's past meeting minutes, agendas, update the roster, and share information about the Color of Justice programs. Judge Shea-Brown also helped establish a content posting procedure between the E&F Committee and the SCJA's Outreach committee.

Education

- Judge Nicole Gaines-Phelps helped lead the E&F Committee's efforts to successfully develop an education session for this year's SCJA Spring Conference, titled "Mindfulness in Decision Making: Understanding the Science and Practical Approaches to Better Decision Making." The session is being co-sponsored with the SCJA's Family and Juvenile Law Committee.
- The E&F Committee co-sponsored the "Procedural Justice" training with the Gender and Justice Commission, which was held at the 2018 Fall Judicial Conference.
- The E&F Committee was a co-sponsor to the 2019 Judicial Institute Judicial Fellows Clinic. The two-day intensive seminar was designed to prepare diverse legal professionals from across Washington state to become judges.

Color of Justice – The SCJA Board allocated \$6000 in 2018-19FY to support the development and implementation of "The Color of Justice" programs across Washington State superior courts. It is a program that was developed by the National Association of Women Judges that connects judges from marginalized backgrounds with students who also come from marginalized backgrounds. The hope is to inspire students to pursue careers in the law and on the bench, and to help the court create positive ties with the community. This was the first year that the SCJA Board provided funding to these programs, and the SCJA E&F Committee took on the task of implementation. Staff and members of the E&F Committee developed a process whereby courts could apply for the funding to host a "Color of Justice" event at their court. We were able to work with Yakima County, Thurston County, and next up will be Whatcom County. So far, the programs have been able to reach around 80 students in Yakima and Thurston counties, with a larger group to be expected for the Whatcom County Color of Justice event on April 24. The "Color of Justice" programs seem to be very successful, and we are already getting inquiries from other courts who are interested in participating.

Liaising Work – The Committee spent the earlier part of the fiscal year reviewing its mission and charge. One area that the Committee discussed was our role in

“maintaining liaison with the state Commissions concerned with issues of justice, gender, and diversity.” This is an area that our group is still working on, but we have several Committee members who already serve on some of the statewide boards and commissions, who have been providing liaison updates at every E&F Committee meeting.

WORKS IN PROGRESS AND PLANNED FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Color of Justice – The E&F Committee plans to request continued funding for the Color of Justice programs at the same amount as last year, \$6000, which essentially breaks down to 3 jurisdictions at \$2000 per jurisdiction. This year’s Color of Justice Programs in Yakima, Thurston, and soon to be Whatcom were very successful, and we have already gotten requests from other courts who are interested in bringing a program to their jurisdiction.

Media & Outreach – We will continue to work with Judge Shea-Brown on making sure our content on the SCJA’s website is up to date, and making sure that our meeting minutes and agendas are uploaded for institutional memory.

Legislative – Judge Eric Lucas serves as the E&F Committee’s liaison to the larger SCJA Legislative Committee. Judge Lucas was unable to make a lot of this year’s meetings, but we hope that this can be a continued dialogue with him on ways that the E&F Committee can get involved in the legislative process.

Education – We will be sponsoring a session on “Mindfulness” at this year’s SCJA Spring Conference.

New Leadership - Judge Whitener has asked Judge Phelps to co-chair the Equality and Fairness Committee moving forward. Judge Phelps has accepted the opportunity to serve as E&F’s co-chair. The leadership change will be effective May 1.

DESERVING SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Judge Nicole Gaines-Phelps – Judge Phelps has been an exceptional leader for our E&F Committee. She helped collaborate with other judges in developing a successful education proposal for the upcoming SCJA Spring Conference. The session will be on “Mindfulness and Judicial Decision Making.” The SCJA E&F Committee has struggled for the past couple of years to get its education proposals accepted by the Education Committee, but Judge Phelps’ leadership and vision around education has helped inspire new ideas and action.

Judge Phelps also took the lead in helping to plan and coordinate the Color of Justice programs in Thurston County and Whatcom County. She has graciously accepted to begin her next term on the Committee in an official Co-Chair role with Judge Whitener.

Judge Jackie Shea-Brown – Judge Shea-Brown worked very hard to get our web presence up on the SCJA’s main website. She helped us develop processes for posting content, archive old E&F information, post current agendas and meeting minutes, and highlight the work the Committee is doing with the Color of Justice programs.

PLEASE RETURN BY APRIL 11 TO:

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