



A publication of the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry

Suffolk County neighborhood meetings a rousing success

Informational sessions continue as Register Iannella announces fall schedule



Reaching out to the community: Register Richard Iannella (top) shares a lighter moment with West Roxbury residents. First Justice Elaine Moriarty (above) speaks about difficult decisions often made by the court, while residents in attendance at the session listen with great interest (below right).

If public response to the first in a series of neighborhood meetings is any indication, Suffolk County residents are truly concerned about issues affecting their lives. More than 75 people attended each of the community gatherings held by the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry this spring — bringing with them a multitude of questions about the protection of property and assets, filing and safeguarding of wills, adoption and guardianship, and other vital issues.

“The public definitely appreciates the opportunity to learn more about the Probate and Family Courts, and more importantly, to meet with us face-to-face in order to get answers to their questions,” said Register Iannella. “After all, providing exceptional service to residents of the county means we have to reach beyond the courthouse walls. I look forward to conducting many more neighborhood meetings this fall,” he added.

During the sessions, Register Iannella is joined by a Justice of the Probate Court. Registry staff are also on-hand to answer questions and assist the public. Anyone wishing to host a community meeting or with questions about the program is encouraged to call Register Iannella at (617) 788-8300.



Fall Meeting Schedule:

- **Wednesday, September 12**

Revere
Revere City Hall
281 Broadway
7:00 PM

- **Monday, September 17**

Roxbury
Dudley Branch Library
65 Warren Street
7:00 PM

- **Monday, October 1**

Chelsea
Chelsea Public Library
569 Broadway
7:00 PM

- **Thursday, October 25**

Dorchester
Codman Square
Branch Library
690 Washington Street
7:00 PM

- **Thursday, November 1**

Dorchester
Kit Clark Senior Center
100 Dorchester Avenue
1:00 and 7:00 PM

Additional dates and locations to be announced in coming weeks.

Inside this issue of *The Register*:

Iannella asks for review of adoption laws	2
Judge, Asst. Register receive awards	2
Mobile phone collection drive a success	3
Legal aid available to eligible seniors	3
Iannella leads “Light the Night” walk	4
‘Fast Facts’: A Typical Day at the Registry	4

Register Iannella calls for review of state adoption laws

New oversight from independent observer among proposals made to Legislature

One of the more pleasant duties at the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry is helping to build new families by assisting residents who seek to adopt. Register Richard Iannella said much can be done to improve the adoption process, and he has contacted legislative leaders to suggest that it is time to create a special commission to study the entire adoption process. “I hope that we can strengthen the current system and speed up the adoption process – without additional expense and without compromising the rights of parents and the best interest of children,” he said.

Commenting on a recently publicized adoption case, Iannella suggested that a review of existing law is overdue: “Some of our adoption laws are more

than 150 years old, and their authors never contemplated the number of adoptions of children from other states and foreign countries. Also, many more children are now born out of wedlock, and existing laws weren’t designed to protect the rights of unmarried parents of children in adoption.”

According to Iannella, privacy that is traditionally afforded to the adoption process prevents public scrutiny of the system. Also, adoption agencies in Massachusetts are subject to considerable regulation, but no one is currently charged with ensuring that these regulations have been followed in each and every case. Register Iannella is suggesting that an independent, state-funded agency be given the power to conduct an expert review of each pending adoption in

order to ensure compliance with laws and regulations.

As the law now stands, a child can be placed in a pre-adoptive home months before a home study is conducted in order to ensure the suitability of the adopting parents. “A child can be with new parents for more than a year before a judge gives approval to the adoption,” said Iannella. “The court cannot be blamed for this, as the child was placed in the home many months before the adoption papers were filed in court. I hope the special commission will address these quirks in the law.”

“The intent of adoption is to help children to find a good home with loving parents. I hope we can all work together to make this happen,” Iannella concluded.

Judge Gould, Assistant Register Scully receive honors

Dedication and leadership recognized by women lawyers and judges groups

The Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry adds its congratulations and thanks to those of two groups that recently honored Judge Nancy M. Gould and Assistant Register John M. “Jack” Scully.

Judge Gould is an Associate Justice in the Suffolk Division and previously served as an Assistant Register of Probate in Suffolk County. While in that position, Judge Gould began the highly successful “Lawyer for the Day” program—a program that has been a model for courts across the state and nation. Scully, meanwhile, began work in the Suffolk Probate Registry in 1970, and has been an Assistant Register since 1984.

In ceremonies held on June 5th in Boston, Judge Gould received the “Distinguished Jurist Award” from the Massachusetts Association of Women Lawyers. Later in the month, Assistant Register Scully received the “Distinguished Service Award” conveyed by the Probate Judges Association. That award was presented in recognition of “...his years of professional and dedicated service to the Justices of the Probate and Family Court and to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

“I am proud to serve in the same branch of the judiciary as these fine individuals, and I congratulate both



Justice is well served: Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Justice Nancy Gould and Assistant Register John J. “Jack” Scully, Jr. share a moment at the bench following award recognition ceremonies that honored the pair.

Judge Gould and Assistant Register Scully on receiving these well-deserved honors,” remarked Register Richard Iannella.

Suffolk County Probate answers the “Call to Protect”

More than 125 mobile phones collected on behalf of victims of violence and abuse



Working for a good cause: Registry employees Peter Solomon, Robert Gillespie and Lou Gilardi prepare to send donated mobile phones to Motorola for reprogramming.

Suffolk County Register of Probate Richard Iannella and members of his staff are readying more than 125 old mobile phones for use by persons in fear of violence or abuse.

During a collection drive concluded in early June, Registry clients, attorneys and other concerned individuals donated outdated and deactivated mobile phones to the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry.

“The public’s response was simply overwhelming. We never expected to have so many people participate in this effort,” said Register Iannella. “I think most everyone appreciated the chance to get rid of an old mobile phone while putting it to good use in the process.”

The phones donated during the drive have been sent to Motorola for free reprogramming. The phones are reconfigured to only dial 911 or local domestic violence contact numbers.

They are given free to persons who fear physical abuse so that help can be summoned immediately if violence threatens.

“Every day in Probate Court, we see the devastating effects of violence and abuse on our families and communities,” said Register Iannella. “Through efforts like this, we can be a positive influence on events before they happen – and we might even save a life.”

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and The Wireless Foundation sponsor the “Call to Protect” project, and are supported by local mobile phone collection drives such as the one conducted by the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry.

New partnership promotes free legal assistance for seniors

Eligible seniors urged to make use of Boston Bar Association program

The Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry and the Boston Bar Association’s Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) are teaming up to make eligible senior citizens aware of the valuable program. The Volunteer Lawyers Project oversees a group of attorneys who have agreed to provide free representation and assistance to elderly clients in areas including public benefits, housing, trusts, estates and wills, divorce, guardianship, child support and adoption.

“We’re pleased to partner with the Boston Bar Association as we reach out to Suffolk County seniors,” said Register Iannella. “We hope that this effort will make many more seniors aware of the program, and we encourage them to make use of this very valuable service.”

Outreach efforts planned by the Registry and the Bar Association include program presentations in senior centers and to Councils on Aging and other elder advocacy groups throughout greater Boston and Suffolk County.

Eligibility and contact information is at right:

Volunteer Lawyers Project Eligibility Requirements:

- ◆ **Anyone over age 60 and living in the city of Boston, or;**
- ◆ **Low income seniors aged 65 and older in Revere, Winthrop and Chelsea**

**To enlist the services of the Volunteer Lawyers Project or for more information, please call:
(617) 603-1700**

Don't forget that many of the documents used by the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry are available on-line. Register Richard Iannella's Web site features informational brochures and helpful tips regarding the Probate and Family Court process. The Web site can be found on-line at: www.gis.net/~richardi/



**Suffolk County
Probate & Family Court**
Richard Iannella, Register

24 New Chardon Street
PO Box 9667
Boston, MA 02114



Serving all of Boston, Chelsea, Revere and Winthrop

Iannella leads “Light the Night” First-ever Leukemia Society event to honor Joe Moakley

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society recently named Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Register Richard Iannella and WCVB-TV’s Mike Dowling as Honorary Co-Chairmen of the upcoming “Light the Night Walk” The event takes place on the Boston Common at 6:30 pm on Thursday, September 20th.



“Earlier this summer, I was invited by the chapter to tour the leukemia research and treatment units at one local hospital – one of the most educational and eye-opening experiences of my life,” said Iannella. “After hearing about new inroads into research and treatment and listening to moving stories of courage, spirit and determination as told by leukemia survivors, I pledged to do all that I could to help make this event a success.”

Light the Night features illuminated balloons and candlelight as cancer survivors, families, co-workers and friends gather together to celebrate and commemorate lives touched by cancer. This marks the first time that Light the Night has been held in Boston, and the event is dedicated to the memory of one of Boston’s most distinguished gentlemen – Congressman Joe Moakley.

Iannella encourages those interested in participating in the walk to contact the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society toll-free at: (800) 688-6572; or on the Web at www.lightthenight.org.

Did you know?

Some ‘fast facts’ regarding a typical day in the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry

- 15** times a day or more, a new case is filed in the effort to establish the paternity of a child born to unmarried parents;
- 9** times a day, an unmarried parent files a new case involving child support or visitation issues;
- 8** or more married couples will file for divorce or separation;
- 6** times a day, an individual asks the court to enforce or change part of their divorce agreement;
- 4** or more petitions for guardianship of an adult or child are filed;
- 4** new cases involve settling matters following the death of an individual;
- 2** people ask the court to change their name;
- 1** or more new cases of family abuse is brought to Suffolk County Probate and Family Court;
- 2** times each week, someone begins the adoption process in our court;

In up to **70%** of these cases, one or more litigants appears in our court **without a lawyer**.