



A publication of the Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry

Suffolk Registry to put old mobile phones to new use Cell phone collection drive to aid victims of violence and abuse

Do you have an old, unused mobile phone in the back of a drawer or ready to be thrown away? National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October is the perfect time to put that old phone to good use. With your contribution, families affected by domestic violence and abuse will have a lifeline available if they ever feel threatened or if an attack takes place.

Throughout the month of October, the Suffolk Probate Registry will be collecting unused mobile phones, batteries and chargers on the 3rd floor of the Edward Brooke Courthouse at 24 New Chardon Street in Boston. Donations can also be mailed to the Registry. At the end of the drive, the phones will be sent to Motorola for reprogramming. During that process, the phones are set to dial 911 or other official contact numbers only, and are then given free to those who fear physical abuse or assault so that help can be summoned immediately if they are attacked.

"Response to our first collection drive last year was simply overwhelming, and we received nearly 200 phones," said Register Richard Iannella. "I think

people appreciate the opportunity to get rid of an old mobile phone while putting it to good use in the process." Iannella also reminds contributors that their donations are tax deductible.

Iannella has encouraged Registers of Probate from across Massachusetts to join with Suffolk County by holding similar collection drives during October. From the Berkshires to Cape Cod, many indicate that they will join the effort, including the Registries in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire and Norfolk Counties.

"In the Probate Courts, we see the devastating effect that violence and abuse has on our families every day," said Iannella. "With this effort, we might prevent incidents from happening."

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the *Call to Protect* project are supported by local collection drives like the upcoming Registry effort.

Upcoming Neighborhood Meetings:

After visiting seventeen Suffolk County neighborhoods in the last year, Register Richard Iannella has scheduled community meetings this fall. The dates are as follows*:

Wednesday, September 25th
North End / Waterfront
Nazzaro Community Center
30 North Bennet Street

Wednesday, October 2nd
Back Bay / Bay Village
The Boston Public Library
700 Boylston Street

Tuesday, October 8th
South End
South End Branch Library
685 Tremont Street

All meetings begin at 7:00 pm, and are free and open to the public.

*Meeting schedule subject to change.

Registry establishes domestic violence hotline

Actively working to improve access to Registry and court services, Register of Probate Richard Iannella recently announced the establishment of a telephone hotline for use by families impacted by domestic violence and abuse. "We have a number of programs and dedicated staff already in place to assist victims of domestic violence, and it only makes sense that we make it as easy as possible for them to access these services," he said.

Iannella had previously assisted with efforts to provide a federally-funded Greater Boston Legal Services program with courthouse office space. This allows advocates to provide immediate, confidential service to victims. "Our ongoing partnership with GBLS has been highly successful," said Iannella. "This dedicated line will only supplement our efforts in the future, and shows that we're doing all that we can to assist these victims and their families."

The new hotline number is (617) 788-8307, and is staffed each business day.

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A message from Register Richard Iannella:

“What’s in a name? For many, true meaning is what’s most important”



Your name is quite literally your life. Like it or not, your name is often the very first thing people use to identify or to classify you. Your name establishes

a first impression – even before people get an accurate look at what you are really all about. But what if you don’t like your name - the way it sounds or the impression it gives others? The question might make you think of a funny scene from the movie *The Wedding Singer*. In it, the tears flow when a bride-to-be realizes that with her new husband’s last name, she’ll be known forever as Julia Gulia.

Recently, the state Appeals Court ruled in the case of a boy caught in a legal battle over his last name. His mother had been using the last names of his biological father and his stepfather at various times. The biological father went to court, and the court ordered that his last name be used. The Appeals Court overruled, though, stating that the best interests of the youth were not considered and that no greater weight should be given to fathers than to mothers in such cases.

While most accept and embrace the name given to them, hundreds of people come to our court each year seeking a name change. Often, they are women who return to a maiden name following divorce, those seeking a name change for religious reasons (or reverting to their original name after parting ways with the teachings), adopted children taking on the new family name, and those who simply do not like the name that they have.

Although the last category is the exception rather than the rule, there have been a number of intriguing name changes that make you wish you knew more about the story behind them. One man came to our office to change his name to John Kennedy – presumably in honor of the late President. Another, perhaps an aspiring rap star, sought the legal moniker of Snoop D. Love. In that vein, our staff held its collective breath and waited for an onslaught when one local radio station announced a spectacular prize package for the first person to legally change their name to Puff Daddy. Despite the incentive, no one appeared here to do so. Most recently, the change to Britney has been a popular one – complete with the precise spelling used by the pop star.

While certain name changes may be considered ‘trendy,’ first-generation immigrants looking to simplify the spelling or pronunciation of their names have been petitioning the court for years. Truong to Tina (Vietnamese), Ndidiana to Charity (Nigerian), and Vladimir to William (Russian) are some recent examples. Students and younger adults most often take this step. One stated that he was doing so “because I want to fit in at school,” while another said, “I simply want to be an American in each and every way possible.”

Conversely, many older immigrants who changed their name in younger years are coming to court to return to their given name. Many doing so say they are no longer affected by the pressures of youth and want to return to the name given to them in their native land.

There are countless other reasons that people seek to change their name, and just as many resources to help them with that goal. Etymologists study the origin of words. Many books give definitions and meanings for names. Web sites take surveys and reveal the latest trendy names. One Web site even claims that your name is “represented by a numeric formula.” Simply stated, your name is really a number, and if it doesn’t add up, you’re in trouble and need to find a new one...quick!

In his application to the court, one man expressed the sentiment of many who change their name in just one sentence: “I do not feel any sense of identification with my name,” he wrote. As far as the court was concerned, barring bad intention, blatant deception or nefarious activity on the part of the man now known as Wolf Mars, it was just about as good a reason as any.

Richard Iannella

***Families in Crisis* article prompts many responses**

Readers of *The Register* continue to react to this past summer’s front-page story entitled: “*Families in Crisis: Can we do more to make marriage work?*” The article addressed divorce and out-of-wedlock birth rates, and detailed Register Richard Iannella’s proposals to prepare people for the legal, social and financial obligations of parenthood.

“Many people I know feel that marriage is for the government only,” wrote an East Boston woman who opposed the plan. “My mom has been with her boyfriend for 15 years. For them to get married would cut off benefits they have worked hard for 30 years to earn.” Another East Boston woman reacted more positively: “Marriage has become a throwaway label and parenthood has become a lost art. It was refreshing to read about someone who is taking the initiative to address these issues,” she wrote in a letter to Iannella. Finally, a Boston attorney summed up his reaction with just one sentence: “You are right on the mark on these issues,” he wrote.

Iannella returns as co-chair of *Light the Night* walk

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society benefit scheduled for September 26th in Boston

Once again this year, Register of Probate Richard Iannella is serving as a Co-Chairman of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's *Light the Night* walk in Boston. The event will take place on the Boston Common during the evening of Thursday, September 26th.



courage, spirit and determination, I agreed to help out the local chapter in any way that I could."

Unlike a traditional walkathon, the *Light The Night* event features a brief twilight walk around Boston Common as participants carry illuminated balloons commemorating the lives of those touched by leukemia

"Last summer, I toured research and treatment units at New England Medical Center, and met doctors and patients," said Iannella. "After I heard many moving stories of

and lymphoma. The balloons are color-coded, and represent survivors, family members, loved-ones and friends who show support for the cause.

During the first-ever *Light the Night* walk in Boston last September, well over \$100,000 was raised at the event. "Considering the fact that the walk took place on a rainy night just after the terrorist attacks on America," it was a tremendous success," said Iannella.

Once again this year, the event is dedicated to the memory of the late Congressman Joe Moakley, who died from the disease.

To join this year's walk or to make a contribution, contact the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society at (800) 688-6572, or visit www.lightthenight.org.

Honoring a respected and beloved volunteer

Margaret Diamond lauded for Lawyer for the Day service

Attorney Margaret Diamond is a familiar face at the Suffolk Registry, and her dedication to public service is unmatched. Most surprising is the fact that she isn't a court employee, but a retired attorney who returns to the courthouse several times each month in order to assist those most in need.

As a volunteer Lawyer for the Day, Ms. Diamond provides Registry clients with legal advice as they pursue a case in our court. (In as many as two-thirds of these cases, one or more litigants appears without an attorney.) The program originated here before becoming a state and national model.

Ms. Diamond has been a member of the bar since 1956, and at various times in her career was responsible for overseeing the Lawyer's Referral Service and the Board of Medical Review in Rhode Island. She also practiced international law while living in Bangkok, Thailand.



Far above and beyond the call of duty: (l to r): Attorney Margaret Diamond receives a special citation from Register Richard Iannella.

"When the area's biggest law firms aren't doing their share, it's amazing to see Margaret so willing to come in on a moment's notice and volunteer her time and expertise," said Register Richard Iannella. Lawyer for the Day coordinator Denis Martin echoed the sentiments: "She's an inspiration to all of us, and I'm glad that she's such an important part of our program."

Saving your money:

"Don't pay a company to do what you can do on your own!"

Should private agencies be able to charge exorbitant fees for services that are already provided by the state for free? Register Richard Iannella doesn't think so, and advises the public to save hard-earned money.

This month, Time Magazine reported on a company that charges clients a 35% commission for help in collecting child support payments. "While one might admire the company's business savvy, they are clearly preying on those most in need. By taking more than a third of funds earmarked for child support — money that is supposed to be helping children — you have to question the real motive."

According to Time Magazine, few states cap commissions. Iannella says limits on such fees are definitely in order in Massachusetts, and he plans to submit proposed legislation that would put such restrictions in place.

For up-to-the-minute information about upcoming community meetings, Registry programs and services, court forms and brochures, self-help kits, fee schedules, a virtual tour and more, log onto our Web site at: www.probatecourtianella.com

Additional news and notes from the Suffolk Registry:

Working hard despite budget cuts; intern thanked; parent's rights brochures now available

Despite recent budget cuts and belt-tightening measures that reduced the Suffolk Registry's workforce by nearly 25%, the Registry continues to function without cutting back on programs, services, hours of operation or court sessions.

Register Richard Iannella praises Chief Justice Barbara Dortch-Okara for effectively guiding the court system through the budget storm: "Facing the huge budget deficit head-on, the Chief Justice set out an action plan that directly and responsibly addressed the problem. Although very unpopular, employee furloughs were part of that plan. While some layoffs occurred and others are still likely, the furlough program worked as intended and massive layoffs were avoided," he said.

The Suffolk Registry thanks Christopher Fong of Boston for his volunteer service as a summer intern. Fong attends Colby-Sawyer College in New Hampshire. Register Iannella, meanwhile, invites college students pursuing related degrees who would like a future internship opportunity to send a cover letter and resume to his attention at: **Suffolk County Probate and Family Court Registry, 24 New Chardon Street, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02114.**

As part of the effort to make Suffolk County parents aware of legal aid and support services available to them, the Registry has produced two new brochures — *A Mother's Guide to Programs and Resources in Suffolk County* and *A Father's Guide to Programs and Resources in Suffolk County*.

"Because some programs are strictly for mothers while others are in place for fathers, it only made sense for us to make two separate but comprehensive brochures available to people who need help," said Front Desk Manager Tim Perry. "Regardless of the issue at hand, everyone has a right to know about the programs and services available to them, and these new brochures should help us inform those who come into our court," added Register Richard Iannella.

If you would like to receive copies of either pamphlet, stop by the Registry or call Iannella's office at (617) 788-8300.



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

24 New Chardon Street, 3rd floor
Boston, MA 02114

