

# Probate court rehires retiree part time

BY RALPH H. ECHEZMAN  
STAFF WRITER

Tempera are beginning to flare as various county departments try to adjust to the loss of 240 of the county's 4,000 employees due to early retirement.

The Oakland County Probate Court was one of the hardest hit departments, as 23 staff members, including many top administrators, took the county's early retirement offer last fall.

The most shocking aspect of the loss to the county's four probate judges was that their 14-year court administrator, Barbara Conlilio, and her chief deputy elected to leave.

The judges decided to bring Conlilio back on a part-time basis to smooth the transition, said Barry Grant, the outgoing chief judge of Probate Court.

"We need some time to fill

these critical positions," Grant said. "This is our way to bridge the gap."

But many of the 25 Oakland County commissioners were not amused. John McCulloch, the Republican chairman of the commission's finance committee, shot off a press release Dec. 23 saying the probate judges are "on shaky legal ground (and) acting outside their authority" in rehiring Conlilio.

Marilynn Gosling, the Republican chairwoman of the personnel committee, said "just about every commissioner is upset about it."

Grant contends that Probate Court, being part of the judicial branch of government, is exempt from certain rules the legislative and executive branches of government might come up with for various county departments.

Gosling said the judges are relying on a circuit court ruling a few years ago giving Probate Court administration the right to negotiate directly with unionized probate employees.

So it's debatable as to when the Probate Court can write its own ticket and when it must follow the commission and county executive rules, Gosling said. "There's still some dispute. It's fuzzy."

Grant said, "We are very confident the law is on our side. We're only interested in making this court operate as efficiently as possible."

Conlilio, Grant said, will work no more than 1,000 hours in 1994 (about 20 hours a week) and won't receive fringe benefits.

Executive Brooks Patterson said he met with the four Probate Court judges Dec. 27, and an agreement was reached to bring

Conlilio back, if she agrees to the conditions. "If she accepts our compromise, we have a deal," Patterson said.

The county commission and Patterson agreed on the early retirement program earlier this year to reduce the county's spending on personnel. Because the county government had been on track to spend more than it collected in taxes, it was necessary to reduce costs.

This is a problem that most government units in Michigan (state, county, city, township and school districts) have had to deal with. Usually the problem is attributed to property assessment freezes from Lansing, low interest earnings on investments and unfunded mandates from state and federal governments.

# Give blood, get free DSO ticket vouchers

Give a pint of blood to the Red Cross Sunday, Jan. 3, and they'll give you a pair of DSO vouchers good for selected concerts in January, February and March.

Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall will provide the first 500 people who try to donate blood at seven area locations with a pair of vouchers.

The premier donation location is the 1613 Carlton Hotel in Dearborn. Donors there will also receive a certificate valid for a re-

duced room rate of \$69. The hotel is located in Fairlane Plaza, 500 Town Center Drive. To make an appointment, call 274-6450. Donations will be accepted noon to 6 p.m.

The other locations are open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call 494-2800 or (800) 582-4383. The locations in the Observer & Eccentric area are:

■ Westgate Plaza, 6700 Canton Center Road between Ford and Warren roads in Canton Township.

■ The corner of Franklin and Square Lake roads in Bloomfield Hills.

■ The Crowne Pointe Building, Greenfield at Lincoln in Oak Park.

# Cab rides available

New Year's Eve revelers who plan to drink should cut out this article and put it in their wallets. To get a free taxi-cab ride home on New Year's Eve, just call 353-1994 to get in touch with Project LifeRide, sponsored by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, radio station WOMC-FM, BlueCare Network and MCA Mortgage Co.

The free rides will be available from 9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 31, to 5 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 1.

Aron residents may get these free rides home from private parties, bars, restaurants and hotels in Wayne, Macomb and Oakland counties.

Because of the popularity of the LifeRide program last year (751 rides were requested), MADD personnel encourage revelers to arrange beforehand with family and/or friends for safe post-rides passage.

But if that doesn't work, call 353-1994.

# OU sessions target info on planning, accountancy

Oakland University has scheduled a free information session on the personal financial planning and para-accountant certificate programs.

Call 370-3120 and they'll mail you a brochure.

The personal finance session will occur 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 5, in the Oakland Center on campus. Walter Kerrigan, a certified public accountant with the Institute for Financial Planning, will speak.

The para-accountant session will occur 7:30-8:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 10, in the Oakland Center. Gloria Boddy, the program director, will speak.

Courses in the personal finance program begin the week of Jan. 18 at Royal Oak Shrine High School. Courses in the para-accountant program begin the week of Jan. 24 at Rochester Adams High School.

Oakland University is located on the south side of Walton Road between Squirrel and Adams, partly in Rochester Hills and partly in Auburn Hills.

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Deferred Billing ends January 3.  
Sale ends January 13.  
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