

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

Volume 158, No. 76

## Judge grooms new lawyers

### Demacopoulos finds mentoring very rewarding and inspiring part of her job

BY JOHN FLYNN ROONEY  
*Law Bulletin staff writer*

Cook County Circuit Judge Anna Helen Demacopoulos tries to provide guidance for newer lawyers to improve their performance.

Demacopoulos, who presides over traffic and misdemeanor cases in the 6th Municipal District in Markham, said judges who she appeared before as a prosecutor acted as mentors to her.

So now, she wants to do likewise.

Demacopoulos said she occasionally meets in her chambers with newer lawyers assigned to her courtroom to discuss rules of evidence and provide suggestions about how to improve their performance.

The discussions are "not case specific, but just about their performance," she said.

Jason E. Coelho, an assistant Cook County state's attorney, worked in Demacopoulos' courtroom for about a year.

"She definitely gave a lot of constructive criticism with the mindset of making me a better attorney," he said.

Cook County Circuit Judge Marjorie C. Laws, the 6th Municipal District's presiding judge, called Demacopoulos "very compassionate (and) she's concerned about the individuals who appear before her. When she has the time, she shows the teacher side of her, trying to help young attorneys assigned to her courtroom."

Demacopoulos said, "Watching young lawyers become great trial lawyers is really rewarding to me."

Demacopoulos and her three siblings are the children of Greek immigrants. While born in Chicago, Demacopoulos and her family moved to Palos Heights in the early 1970s.

She is a member of a large extended family with 27 first cousins, including Nia Vardalos, who wrote the screenplay for and starred in "My Big Fat Greek Wedding."

Her parents, Constantine and Angie Demacopoulos, stressed education, she said. While in high school, she participated in speech and debate programs.

While attending Loyola University Chicago, she took a course related to communications in the legal system. That class sparked her interest in becoming a lawyer, she said.

Demacopoulos enrolled at The John Marshall Law School in 1982. She struggled the first semester, but several professors "mentored me and gave me the confidence I needed to get through," Demacopoulos said.

Demacopoulos now teaches trial advocacy at John Marshall and mentors members of the school's Hellenic Law Student Association. She serves as that group's adviser.

She also serves as a mentor and leader for young Greek-American

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**Anna Helen Demacopoulos**

*Judge, Cook County Circuit Court*

- **Elected:** 2008.
- **Career:** Assistant Cook County state's attorney, 1985-2008.
- **Age:** 51.
- **Law school:** The John Marshall Law School, 1985.
- **Interests:** Cooking for large family dinners, visiting relatives overseas and watching daughters' soccer games.

lawyers, said Endy D. Zemenides, of counsel to Johnston, Greene LLC and executive director of the Hellenic American Leadership Council.

"People who she mentored while they were students are now becoming leaders," he said.

After graduating from law school and becoming an Illinois lawyer in November 1985, Demacopoulos began work as an assistant Cook County state's attorney.

She prosecuted jury trials, including several death penalty cases, along with hundreds of bench trials.

For two years, she worked in the courtroom of Cook County Circuit Judge Themis N. Karnezis, who now sits on the 1st District Appellate Court. Demacopoulos called Karnezis a mentor.

Karnezis called Demacopoulos

exceptionally hard working and well prepared.

"She just knew how to try a case," he said. "She did very good with juries."

After working in felony courtrooms, Demacopoulos became a supervisor in the state's attorney's office. But during her time as a prosecutor, she also decided she wanted to become a judge.

She placed among a group of finalists for two rounds of associate judge vacancies. She also ran as a Democrat in three primary races for vacancies in the Cook County Circuit Court's 15th Subcircuit.

In November 2008, she prevailed in the election and took the oath of office as a judge a month later.

Following judicial training and a brief stint at Traffic Court, she moved to the 6th Municipal District.

She handled domestic violence cases at the Markham courthouse for about 18 months before shifting to her current assignment.

Demacopoulos said she handled about 260 bench trials last year. She also presided over six jury trials and some murder cases.

"The best part of my job is watching people who transform themselves after they have alcohol treatment in DUI or misdemeanor cases," she said.

Coelho, a prosecutor, said Demacopoulos treats defendants fairly, including at sentencing.

"She was always looking toward rehabilitation and to help the person," he said. "She gave them the proper alcohol or substance treatment they needed and incarceration if necessary."

Jeffrey R. Aprati, a criminal defense lawyer who represents clients before Demacopoulos, said she's not afraid to find a defendant not guilty.

"On a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of fairness, ability and knowledge, she's a 20," he said.

Demacopoulos handles a heavy court call effectively and disposes of cases in a timely manner, said Laws, the presiding judge.

Demacopoulos and her husband, Andreas Kosmas, are the parents of 12-year-old twin daughters.

The girls play on a club soccer team and she said she enjoys seeing them in action.

"We travel all over to watch them play," she said. "I'm your typical suburban soccer Mom."

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