Mullen wants to reach all judges

By Bethany Krajelis
Law Bulletin staff writer

Lake County Circuit Judge Margaret J. Mullen doesn’t want to leave anyone behind. As the presiding judge of the 19th Judicial Circuit’s Law Division, Mullen strives to make sure litigants don’t fall through the cracks and in her new role as president of the Illinois Judges Foundation (IJF), she said she wants to “ensure maximum participation from Illinois judges.”

“What I hope is that we would have every judge in the state make a donation to the Illinois Judges Foundation, even if it is a small donation, as a gesture of solidarity for the goals of the foundation,” she said.

While Mullen’s mission could be construed as a challenge given the state’s roster of judges tops 900 and doesn’t even include retired judges, her colleagues said they do not doubt that she will accomplish her goal.

Second District Appellate Court Justice Mary Seminara Schostok said, “If Margaret says she is going to do something, she’s going to do it.” Schostok has known Mullen, 55, for several years. She used to appear before Mullen, who took a seat behind the bench in 1992, during her time as an assistant Lake County state’s attorney.

Instead of “your honor,” Schostok now refers to Mullen as “my BFF,” which stands for “best friends forever.”

Schostok said she can’t think of anyone better to lead the IJF and help further its mission to promote public confidence in the judiciary, foster awareness of the court system and facilitate diversity in the legal profession.

“She is just an enthusiastic worker and is committed to this cause,” Schostok said. “She wants to reach out to all of the judges so we go beyond the same people and get new people involved and I think with her tenacity and personality, she’ll be able to do it.”

Cook County Circuit Judge Jesse G. Reyes agreed and as a past president of the group, said he knows the challenges that Mullen will face this year.

He served as president of the IJF during the first two years of its existence. The organization was officially created in 2007 through a gift from the Illinois Judges Association (IJA) with the goal of serving as its philanthropic arm.

Margaret J. Mullen
Circuit Judge
19th Judicial Circuit


Age: 55.


Interests: Gardening, swimming, water-skiing and spending time with her family: husband, Terry Campton, daughter Teresa, 24, a first-year law student at John Marshall, and son Jimmy, 22.

“We’re still new to the foundational world and have had growing pains like any other young organization,” Reyes said. “She’s very dynamic. She’s also a very dedicated person and is definitely...
devoted to the foundation and the efforts we’ve established so I think she will do a
great job during her year as president.”

Reyes said like all new presidents,
Mullen came in with her own agenda,
which included the idea to “leave no judge
behind.”

“It’s a challenging one, but she’s done
very well so far reaching out to judges
throughout the state, both active and
retired,” he said. “She’s always up for a
challenge and has that type of personality
to try something out to see if it works. You
have to be a little bit of a risk taker in
foundational work and I think she is.”

Sworn in as the group’s president in
June, Mullen hasn’t wasted any time
getting to work, said Kathy Hosty, the IJF’s
executive director.

“She has already done so much for our
foundation,” Hosty said, explaining that
Mullen made it a point to reach out to
judges across the state, rather than just
those from Chicago and its surrounding
counties.

“A lot of downstate judges are starting
to get involved,” Hosty said. “She’s a very
approachable judge who wants to bring
everyone together to really further the
foundation.”

Earlier this summer, the IJF started to
organize its donor base through a
computerized system, something Mullen
said will make it easier to contact and keep
track of its donors.

Mullen said she knows other charities
and organizations have needs, especially
during tough economic times, but said she
hopes her fellow colleagues behind the
bench see the benefit in donating to the
foundation.

“We, as judges, have a valuable perspec-
tive as to where money should be applied
to benefit the legal system,” she said.

Mullen said the IJF — which has a
cubicle at The Chicago Bar Association and
holds occasional meetings in donated space
at Tabet, DiVito & Rothstein LLC — uses
the donations it receives each year to fund
at least three programs.

It funds the American Bar Association’s
Judicial Intern Opportunity Program, which
gives first- and second-year law students a
“bird’s eye view of the judiciary,” Mullen
said.

Minority or financially disadvantaged
law students across the nation can
participate in the program, she said, adding
that the interns get a stipend for spending
the summer as a judicial law clerk.

Mullen said the IJF gives the ABA about
$25,000 each year to help fund the
program. This year, nearly 200 law
students participated in the ABA
internship program.

In addition, Mullen said the IJF funds
the Judge Harold Sullivan Law School
Scholarship, a $5,000 scholarship awarded
to one of the nine Illinois law schools each
year. The group named it in honor of the
late Cook County judge who helped found
the IJA.

The IJF also funds “7 Reasons to Leave
the Party,” an IJA program that puts judges
in front of students to talk about the legal
and personal consequences of drinking and
driving.

In its nearly four-year existence, Mullen
said the IJF has managed to make a
difference with these programs. She also
said the group’s spring reception and
summer baseball outing have already
turned into “signature events.”

“I think it’s important for judges to
have a mechanism to express their
philanthropy and that’s what IJF does
uniquely,” she said.

At the suggestion of IJF’s vice
president, Cook County Circuit Judge
Michael B. Hyman, Mullen said the group
will host a strategic planning session next
month.

“We are hoping to get a group together
to focus on shared goals so we can move
forward,” Mullen said.

When Mullen isn’t working to connect
with all of the state’s active and retired
judges in her role with the IJF, she keeps
busy at her day job as presiding judge of
the Lake County’s Law Division.

She also enjoys gardening, swimming,
waterskiing and answering the occasional
legal question from her daughter, a first-
year law student at The John Marshall Law
School, her alma mater.