

California Courts News Transcript

Title: The 2010 Beyond the Bench Conference

Date: July 2, 2010

Superior courts in California handled more than 592,000 juvenile and family filings in 2009. It's a heavy caseload. So learning from others how to do more with less – is time well spent. That was the goal of the 20th annual Beyond the Bench conference, paid for through registration fees and grant funding.

More than 1,200 judges, attorneys, CASAs, court administrators, probation officers, mediators, social workers, psychologists, and other providers all came together to share ideas during the two day event.

Abigail Roseman, El Dorado Attorney *"You sometimes think that everybody does things the way you do it in your own county and it's wonderful to learn that they do things differently, and sometimes they do things better."*

This year's theme was "Collaboration Works" – which leads to successes for children and families at little cost to the courts and the counties.

Michael Roosevelt, CFCC, Sr. Court Services Analyst *"When different courts work together we create more efficiencies, we save money, we're more productive, these courts talk to each other, jurisdictions talk to each other, so in the end everybody benefits."*

There were more than 70 workshops, something for everyone - engaging and interactive. The emphasis was on very practical advice; like this session: "Defining Reasonable Efforts in Unreasonable Fiscal Times."

Debra Zanders-Willis, S.D. County Child Welfare Dir. *"We still have to provide services and we still have to, now more than ever, develop creative ways to provide those services to families and youth. We're going from Cadillac services to smart cars; really."*

Hon Sherri Sobel, Referee, Los Angeles Superior Court *"What you need to provide is what is necessary to get those children safely home. If you're working for parents, for god sakes yell. If you're working for children make sure your kids are getting what they need, and if you're working for the department just ask for what's necessary."*

One of the most controversial topics was raised by keynote speaker Dwayne Betts.

Hon. Michael Nash, Los Angeles Juvenile Court P.J. *"I would refer to him as a husband, father, teacher, a child advocate, a writer and a poet."*

He is also a convicted felon. He was a college bound 16-year old when he was sentenced to 9 years in prison for carjacking.

California Courts News Transcript

R. Dwayne Betts, Author/Juvenile Justice Advocate *“There is a better way to treat a 16 year old who was clearly troubled than send him to prison with adults.”*

Betts spent his prison time reading everything he could get his hands on, tutoring other inmates, law clerking; and when he got out, he wrote his memoirs. Now he shares his beliefs about sending kids to prison.

R. Dwayne Betts, Author/Juvenile Justice Advocate *“I think the practical advice is we have to stop sending juveniles to prison with adults; that’s the first thing. And the other thing is we really have to look at the programs that have worked and find out how to get the best for the money we’re spending in confining people.”*

In fact, California’s Administrative Office of the Courts has formed the “Community Corrections Program” which includes parolee re-entry courts. The goal is to help people stay out of prison once they’re released. And Betts says that education is the key.

R. Dwayne Betts, Author/Juvenile Justice Advocate *“Especially when we recognize that there’s a true connection between the failures in education, and the failures in the justice system. There’s a connection. I think that if you’re 14 years old, 15 years old and you know what a verb is, you’re less likely to rob somebody.”*

I’m Leanne Kozak reporting from San Diego for California Courts News.