Shelby County probate judge hires mental health programs coordinator

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Shelby County Probate Judge Jim Fuhrmeister has hired prosecutor Allison Boyd to serve in the newly created position of Programs Coordinator for Mental Health Services and Legal Counsel to the Probate Judge.

The hiring was effective Monday.

Fuhrmeister said that with prison reform, state mental hospital closures, and the rise substance abuse - particularly heroin - at critical levels in the county "our county, it is important that we devote our full attention and resources to treating those in need and to protecting our communities."

Prior to joining the probate office Boyd was a Shelby County Assistant District Attorney working in the mental health, drug and veteran treatment courts and she is a member of the Board of Directors of Chilton-Shelby Mental Health Center, Fuhrmeister said. "She has the knowledge and skill to work with community stakeholders, law enforcement and other government agencies to offer the support of the Probate Judge's office in addressing these urgent issues."

"She (Boyd) will be working with law enforcement, existing mental health agencies, treatment courts, community groups and others to look for new ways to help address mental health and substance abuse issues in our county," Fuhrmeister said. "She will be available to existing agencies to assist them in developing programs."

"With the scarce resources in mental health care, we have to find new ways to encourage people to seek treatment and to provide the programs to meet their needs," said Fuhrmeister, whose job often involves having to commit people with mental issues to treatment centers. "This is a very loosely described position because I want Allison to think creatively and find solutions that have not been tried in Shelby County in the past."

"We've got to come up with new ideas, Allison will take the point on this," Fuhrmeister said.

Boyd also will serve as legal counsel to Fuhrmeister and advise him on changing areas of the law affecting the probate office, such as same-sex marriage, voting rights and elections, Fuhrmeister said.

"The legal landscape affecting the Probate Office is rapidly changing. Allison will bring her knowledge as an attorney and help me anticipate and prepare for new developments affecting my office."

Funding for the new position comes from an existing, dedicated Mental Health Fund and will not impact the Shelby County budget. Fuhrmeister said.

Boyd served as Assistant District Attorney since July, 2007. Prior to that, she was in private practice in Tuscaloosa and her practice included probate, estate planning and involuntary mental health commitments,

She serves on the Board of Directors of Chilton-Shelby Mental Health Center, is President of the Advisory Board of Shelby Volunteers in Service, a county non-profit benefiting senior citizens and volunteer efforts in the county, and is on the Board of Directors of Leadership Shelby County.

Allison has a law degree from the University of Alabama School of Law, an M.B.A. from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a B.S. from Samford University. She is married to Candler Boyd and they have two young children.

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