

Local Pursues L.A. Court Judgeship

Former Malibuite Cynthia Loo, who is running for Los Angeles Superior Judge, office #82, in June, was one of several speakers who addressed the Malibu Democratic Club's annual meeting and endorsement forum last weekend.

Loo is currently a Los Angeles Superior Court Referee in juvenile court, a post to which she was appointed in 2000. She presides over juvenile criminal and delinquency cases. With a strong commitment to public service and volunteerism, she said she feels that by becoming a judge, she can make profound differences and improvements to the judicial system.

After graduating from the University of Southern California Law Center in 1990, Loo worked as an attorney representing abused and neglected children. In 2000, she was appointed as a superior court referee—a position, she said, that carries the same responsibilities as a judge—where she has presided over more than 1000 juvenile court cases in Compton and East L.A. over the last seven years. “I love what I’m doing now, making a difference for young people,” she said, likening her position to a “low-level judge.” Loo as named “Judge of the Year” by the L.A. County Juvenile Court Bar in 2004. She is also active in several organizations, including the California Asian-Pacific American Judges Association and



DETERMINED—With a strong commitment to public service, Cynthia Loo addresses the Malibu Democratic Club in her bid for Superior Court judge in the upcoming June elections.

MSN/Frank Lamonea

Multicultural Bar Alliance, where she is chair of the Diversity on the Bench/Judicial Mentoring Program.

Loo said that in her free time, she volunteers her time at several organizations, including teaching at the People's College of Law, a nonprofit law school with a program geared toward work in the public interest and the Legal Aid of Los Angeles Foundation's Unlawful Detainer Equal Access Project as well as mentoring youth.

With eight years of experience in the judicial

system, Loo said she feels that she is prepared for the challenges of a judgeship and sees the position as an opportunity to facilitate changes in the juvenile court system. “The difference between being a referee and a judge is a little like driving a scooter and driving a car,” she laughed.

She said one of the most important changes she'd like to see in the court system is diversity on the bench. “The problem is that there is only one race on the bench, but the people in the system are all different races,” she said.

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Beside the obvious benefits, including a substantial salary increase, Loo said that one of her ultimate goals is to become a supervising judge for all of Los Angeles County's 90 juvenile courts. "There are so many areas where improvement can be made in the juvenile justice system," she said, adding that she has a laundry list of ideas. "Generally, the courts need to be

more responsive to the needs of youth and families in the system," she said, adding one of her recommendations is smaller case-loads for judges so that they have more time to study each individual case.

Loo says that it is vital that juveniles and their families understand the system. "We need to be more responsive to the needs of the youth and their families in

the system—frequently they have no idea of what is happening to them," she said adding that everyone should receive a handbook explaining their rights.

"There are not enough services for the youth in the system, which is counter to rehabilitation," said Loo. "There are more services for kids who are abused than those who are in the system—and they are

the same kids."

Although she faces two opponents—both from the district attorney's office—in June, Loo is confident that her experience as a referee will bring in the 51 percent of the vote she needs to win, so that a run-off election in November can be avoided.

For more information on Loo, visit her website at www.cynthialoo.com.

BY ROBBY MAZZA
