



CENTER FOR JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE

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CONTACT: 415-459-9211 x23
Maria Sundeen

Marin Legal Legend to Join Sitting Judge at Public Forum to Improve Marin Courts

Director & Chief Counsel of California's Commission on Judicial Performance Joins Legal Panel from 7-9pm at College of Marin

SAN RAFAEL, CA – Esteemed 90-year-old Marin County attorney **Carl Shapiro** will participate in a two-hour panel discussion tomorrow night with **Alameda County Superior Court Judge Kevin Murphy** and **Victoria B. Henley**, Director & Chief Counsel of the **State of California Commission on Judicial Performance (CJP)**, amongst others. The public forum will be held in the College of Marin's Student Services Center and is being presented by the new Marin-based nonprofit **Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE)**, which recently sent an invitational mailer about the event to nearly 89,000 households in Marin County.

"It's critical that the rights of poor people be protected in every stage of the judicial process. Any organization that is dedicated to making the legal system fair and easily available is worthy of our support," said Shapiro.

As the former head of the ACLU's Marin County Chapter and winner of numerous awards for his legal advocacy on behalf of the poor, Shapiro and his late wife Helen have long been celebrated for their lifelong commitment to social justice and to providing free legal services to those in need. They have both been lauded with the **Marin County Bar Association's Barney Dreyfus Award** for humanitarian service and the *Wiley Manuel Award* for pro bono legal services. Mr. Shapiro has practiced law in Marin's courts for 55 years, adding that "he knows a thing or two about how the courts operate."

Official audit recommendations and published guidelines by the Administrative Office of the Courts encourage local courts to engage in community collaborations. **CJE invited all sitting judges and commissioners from the Marin bench to participate, as well as help shape the agenda, but all fourteen members have declined any involvement in the event.**

Recent articles and editorials in both *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* have detailed stunning findings from their years-long investigations into local courts in Las Vegas, NV, and throughout New York state. These investigative accounts and others expose a strikingly similar litany of ethical concerns about judicial bias, corruption, monied interests seeking to influence court decisions, and inappropriate judicial behavior in courts across the country.

336 BON AIR ROAD #447 GREENBRAE, CA 94904 415-267-6149
INFO@CENTERFORJUDICIALEXCELLENCE.ORG

The Marin Judicial Forum: A Community Dialogue will address these issues and others in a two-hour structured Panel Discussion and Question & Answer Session **moderated by broadcast journalist Peter B. Collins**. In addition to Judge Kevin Murphy, Carl Shapiro and the CJP's Victoria Henley, other confirmed panelists include **Cesar Lagleva**, the Chairman of the Marin Human Rights Commission, family law attorney **Barbara Kauffman** and civil litigator **Claudia Brisson**.

According to Jean Taylor, one of CJE's founding Board Members, the nonprofit believes that an informed, collaborative effort is needed to rebuild trust between the local courts and the Marin community they serve.

"The court system was established to ensure fairness and equality under the law. We want to help create a cooperative program of mutual trust, openness and accountability within our local judicial community," said Taylor.

With the Forum and future events like it, CJE aims to foster a constructive, ongoing dialogue between Marin residents, local legal and community organizations, and the Superior Court of California, County of Marin.

Forum co-sponsors include the **Marin Human Rights Commission, College of Marin Students for Social Responsibility, DFA-Marin, the Ruth Group, Women Helping All People**, and the **Marin Peace & Justice Coalition**.

The Forum is open to the general public. All ages are welcome. Admission is free but donations are welcomed. The event site is fully handicapped accessible.

About the Center for Judicial Excellence

The Center for Judicial Excellence is a community-based organization established to improve the Marin judiciary's public accountability and restore and maintain the integrity of Marin County courts. CJE has a 5-Point Plan of Action, which includes 1) Information Gathering, 2) Education, 3) Collaboration 4) Implementation and 5) Citizen Review.

Additionally, CJE has prepared a Public Questionnaire for citizens to document their experiences with the Marin courts. The Questionnaire is available on the CJE website at www.centerforjudicialexcellence.org.

DIRECTIONS

College of Marin, Student Services Building
835 College Avenue
Kentfield, CA 94904

From 101, go West on Sir Francis Drake
Turn left at the fourth stoplight, College Avenue
Follow signs to the Student Services Center
Daily campus parking is \$2.00. Permit dispensers use quarters.

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