

Futures decided with pounding of judge's Gavel

By Chester Allen
Emerald Reporter

It's 1:30 p.m. at the Lane County Jail. A young woman in a red T-shirt empties keys and loose change from her pockets and leads her three small children through a metal detector into the jail's courtroom.

A beefy sheriff's deputy closes the courtroom door, and the electrically controlled lock snaps into place.

The daily Lane District Court arraignment session is about to begin.

Four other people, three men and one woman, are already scattered throughout the spectator seating. The woman tells her children to be quiet, saying "remember children, just like last time."

Across the room, 11 men and two women dressed in dark gray shirts and pants sit in a row of shiny, brown plastic chairs. Two of the men listen intently to their lawyers.

A judge's bench is in the center of the courtroom, between the two sets of chairs. A sheriff's deputy stands guard in front of each of the courtroom's three doors.

Sunlight filters into the dimly lit room from a row of small windows set high in the wall behind the judge's bench.

The bailiff pounds a gavel, and the spectators, prisoners and lawyers stand as District Court Judge Dayrl Larson enters the courtroom.

The first prisoner's name is called.

At an arraignment, a judge reads the legal charges against the accused and explains the possible sentence that would follow a guilty plea or conviction. The prisoner is then asked to enter a plea. If the plea is not guilty, the judge sets a trial date and determines whether the prisoner has an attorney.

'You should know that probation is a leash that can be jerked, and you can be put in jail for one year. This is the last chance for you.'

— Daryl Larson,
District Court judge

During the hearing, most of the prisoners plea not guilty on a variety of charges, including grand theft, resisting arrest and driving under the influence of alcohol.

Moving swiftly through each case, Larson reminds each prisoner of their legal rights. He then sets a trial or hearing date and arranges legal representation for those prisoners without a lawyer.

The woman in the red T-shirt leans forward when a tall, bearded man stands before Larson. After his plea of not guilty, a sheriff's deputy motions him through a door back to his cell.

After the man leaves, the woman fidgets with her watch and smiles down at her children.

The session drones on, with prisoner after prisoner pleading "not guilty."

However, a woman with stringy blond hair and dark smudges under her eyes pleads guilty to her charge, and Larson decides her future in a matter of minutes.

Randi Sue Morris of Eugene pleads guilty to one count of prostitution, a Class A misdemeanor with a possible sentence of one year in Lane County Jail.

As Morris stands before Larson, her attorney, Phil Tufts, presents a plea bargain he arranged with Lane County As-



Graphic by Heather Zilbauer

sistant District Attorney Floyd Prozanski.

Tufts asks that Morris be released to Sunrise House, an inpatient drug rehabilitation program located in Eugene. In addition, Tufts proposes that Morris serve 18 months of probation, submit to an HIV test, agree to publicly disclose the results and agree to 50 hours of community service.

Morris stares at her feet as Tufts reads the proposed agreement to Larson.

After listening to the plea bargain, Larson directly lectures Morris.

Larson asks Morris if she is guilty of one charge of prostitution. Morris says

she is guilty and starts to cry.

A sheriff's deputy hands Morris some tissue.

Tufts says Morris is at the end of her rope, and that "she fears for her life."

After glancing through some papers, Larson sentences Morris to a minimum of three months in Sunrise House, 50 hours of community service and fines her \$150.

Larson also requires Morris to notify the court of any change of address and to

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