

# The Honorable Judge Mia McPherson: Recurring Historical Themes on a Path to the Judiciary and a Home Called DuPage County

By Christian Ketter



**Judge Mia McPherson**

After roughly two weeks on the bench, and between heavy morning and afternoon calls, Judge **Mia S. McPherson** sat down and shared her path to the judiciary. Born in Seymour, Indiana, her father was a fire chief, and her mother was a high school history teacher. Beginning as a French major, Judge McPherson attended Purdue University and switched to major in sociology with a focus on criminology. Among her college coursework was a fascinating class on American Constitutional History, which stood out to her then as something remarkable and has stayed with her since.

But it was not the class that led her perse to law school. Rather, as a member of Alpha Phi International Women's Fraternity, a fellow sorority sister began to study for the LSAT, and the prospect of this endeavor piqued Judge McPherson's interest. That decision paid off and led to enrollment at DePaul University Law School. After earning an award for the highest grade in Constitutional Law at DePaul, she wrote to her college professor to express her sentiments for that thought-provoking American Constitutional History course. While in law school, she accepted an internship with

the Cook County Public Defender's Office and worked as a Supreme Court Rule 711 Licensed Attorney. That opportunity led to invaluable experience, working alongside colleagues, who like McPherson, would go onto great achievements.

After law school, Judge McPherson began working as an Assistant Public Defender (APD) in DuPage County. She explained that she often speaks to young students who are considering the prospect of a legal education and encourages them that the experience one gets as a public defender or prosecutor provides immense expertise in rules of evidence and trial work. When asked what drew her to a path as a public defender, Judge McPherson explained it was an inescapable continual desire to "help people when no one else was going to help." She worked as an APD for six years before entering private practice with Kubiesa, Spiroff, Gosselar, Acker & DeBlasio. There she worked as a municipal prosecutor on behalf of Elmhurst, Oakbrook, Oakbrook Terrace, Wayne, and Westmont, prosecuting ordinance violations, traffic cases, and criminal misdemeanors.

She then worked as a sole practitioner in the Law Offices of Mia S. McPherson, doing criminal defense work and family law. She shared office space with Associate Judge **Michael Fleming**, attorneys **Timothy McHugh**, **Kristopher Capadona**, **Jeffrey Schwartz**, and **Michael Powers** – of whom she is grateful for his mentorship, helping to hone her skills in family law. She served on the campaign team for the Honorable Judge **Linda Davenport** (before her recent appointment to the Third District), and served as Judge **Margaret O'Connell's** campaign manager. Proudly, she watched her colleagues make their way to the judiciary. In fact, her courtroom is next to Judge **Josh Dieden**, a former law school classmate. This native of Southern Indiana said, "if you had told the girl in Seymour, Indiana that she was going to be a judge, she'd have never believed it." But for Judge McPherson it was a continual path of hard work and following one's curiosities in a lifelong career, and with her continual commitment to law and an open mind, the result is not surprising.

Additionally, Judge McPherson's personal life is equally as rich as her career.



*Judge O'Connell, (Supreme Court) Justice O'Brien, (Supreme Court) Justice Carter, (Third District) Justice Davenport, Judge Wheaton*

Not only has Judge McPherson devoted her life to the courtroom, but her home has always been in DuPage. She has been married to Peter McPherson for 26 years. They are proud of their two sons, Charlie (20) and Sam (19). Charlie studies mechanical engineering at University of Minnesota and Sam, a Boilermaker like his mother, is studying science education at Purdue University. "Pete," an actuary and graduate of the University of Michigan, passed his love of numbers onto both of their boys.

On October 21, 2022, Judge McPherson had the honor and privilege of being sworn in at the Third District Appellate Court in Ottawa, by a panel over which Illinois Supreme Court Justice **Robert Carter** presided, joined by Third District

(Supreme Court-elect) Justice **Mary K. O'Brien**, and DuPage County's own, the Honorable Circuit Judge **Bonnie Wheaton**, Circuit Judge **Davenport**, and Circuit Judge **O'Connell**. Having taken her oath to join this illustrious group, Judge McPherson marveled at the richness of this monumental courthouse. She stepped outside the courthouse to the historical commemoration at Washington Square, where the first debate between Abraham Lincoln and then-Senator Stephen A. Douglas, no less a former Justice of Illinois Supreme Court and a part of a historical lineage to which she is forever bound by oath.

During her first day on the bench, Judge McPherson was presented with the Public Interest Law Initiative's 2022

Pro Bono Award, recognizing contributions of pro bono legal services. She was honored for her work in 2021 with the Expungement Clinic, administered by 18th Judicial Circuit Court Clerk, Candance Adams.

When asked how it has been to be a judge so far, without any hesitation whatsoever and a sense of happiness, she said, "Absolutely great. My home is DuPage." And Judge McPherson is no stranger to heavy calls or the frantic pace that a busy courtroom can bring. She has experience as both a public defender and prosecutor, which makes one comfortable with a table full of cases day in and day out. DuPage County has found in Judge Mia McPherson an experienced and candid jurist. □