

LOCAL NEWS

District Court judge connects with youths at Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell

Judge Kimberly Foster steps beyond the courtroom to connect with teens as part of Judicial Outreach Month



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District Court Judge Kimberly Foster talks to members of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell as part of Judicial Outreach month on March 12, 2025. (Aaron Curtis/Lowell Sun)



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LOWELL — District Court Judge Kimberly Foster took a break from the bench to meet with teens at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell on Wednesday, offering a glimpse into the inner workings of the justice system.

In an interactive discussion with about a dozen teens, Foster shared her journey from growing up in Somerville to becoming a judge, explaining how a decision in sixth grade to pursue law shaped her career. Her visit to Lowell was part of the American Bar Association's National Judicial Outreach Week, aimed at fostering community understanding and trust of the justice system.

Foster primarily serves in the Chelsea District Court, as well as the Lynn District Court. She described District Court as “a community court,” while adding, “It’s never a dull moment.”

“We are the first stop for people in need of services, in need of protection,” Foster told the teens. “If you are involved in a crime, that’s where you are going to go, if you want a restraining order, any civil cases. So, we really do resolve conflict in the community.”

Foster said that mental health and substance abuse issues drive the majority of crimes she encounters. As the presiding justice of the Recovery Court in Lynn District Court — formerly known as Drug Court — she works closely with individuals in the court system, helping to connect them with treatment programs and building support networks aimed at recovery and rehabilitation.

“It’s challenging, yet rewarding,” Foster said. “We’ve had a lot of participants overdose and die, which is very sad after seeing such success at first. It’s just the nature of the disease, so it’s trying, but great to see people go on to succeed, because people do recover.”

Foster opened the floor to questions from the teens. Among them was Hadassa Pelissier, who asked how Foster approaches decision-making from the bench — particularly when it

comes to sentencing — and how she copes with feeling like she may have made a mistake. Foster said that within District Court, she has the authority to revisit and amend her decisions after further reflection leads her to believe an error was made.

Foster addressed a range of questions, including the functions of the court system and the role mental health plays. The teens also delved into personal topics, asking her thoughts on her salary and whether she has ever felt in danger on the job — a concern she has not personally experienced, she said.

When asked about the “dumbest case” she had ever presided over, Foster recounted a couple examples, including an animal cruelty case involving a cat that had been kicked.

After nearly an hour of conversation, the session concluded with Foster expressing her admiration for the group to Club Pathways Manager Jenna Kapp, who helped organize the event. Foster described the teens as “wonderful and engaged.”

“It’s very important for the public to understand what we do and meet us,” Foster said. “Especially with young kids, just to open a window maybe, and have them start thinking that this is something they could do.”

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