



New Judge Profile

Anna Eckhart

*Kootenai County Magistrate Judge
First Judicial District*

January 16, 2015



Meet Anna Marie Eckhart, Magistrate Judge for Kootenai County!

Judge Eckhart’s legal career began long before she went to law school. She started as a receptionist for Coeur d’Alene attorneys Charles Dodson and James Raeon in 1985, where she got on-the-job training from the ground up. She completed a paralegal program through North Idaho College in the early 1990’s, then obtained a bachelor’s degree from Lewis-Clark State College in 1997. From there, she went to Gonzaga Law School, graduating in 2000.

Having completed her legal education, Ann rejoined Dodson and Raeon as an attorney and worked there until January of 2003, when she took a position as an assistant city attorney for the City of Coeur d’Alene in the criminal division. She advanced to Deputy City Attorney and, among other duties, devoted nine years to the Kootenai County Mental Health Court, for which she was honored in July, 2014. In June of 2014, Anna was selected from a pool of 17 applicants to replace the retiring Judge Penny Friedlander as Magistrate with chambers in Kootenai County beginning in September, 2014.

Anna credits Charlie Dodson and Jim Raeon, along with her husband and her mother, as having most influenced her to study the law. Had she not entered a legal career, she might have liked having a little coffee and bakery shop, as she loves baking. Her love of cooking and baking started very young and she fondly remembers, as a little girl, baking Christmas cookies with her mother. Because she is not a “morning person”, though, she thinks it more likely that she would have been a teacher of kindergarten or first grade students.

Judge Eckhart also enjoys outdoor activities, including skiing, biking, and running and hiking with her dogs. She and her husband got Oscar, a male Weimaraner, in 2005, then Abby, a female Weimaraner, a couple years later. She notes that Weimaraners are a high-energy breed and may take out their frustrations by “eating your house” if not given enough exercise. Running with the dogs is not just enjoyable, it is something of a necessity.

Speaking of things she enjoys, Anna specifically called out the Coeur d’Alene restaurant, [Fleur de Sel](#). She has gone there with her husband since it opened and tries to visit once each season to enjoy the changes of the menu. As well as the seasonal menu, she admires the view from the restaurant and the

outdoor seating in the summer. If you visit the restaurant, Anna insists that you try the “heavenly, light, chewy” macarons for desert, which are not to be confused with shredded coconut macaroons.\

Anna grew up in Salida, Colorado, a small town southeast of Denver, where her father’s family had a ranch and meat packing plant, founded by her grandparents who were both from Italy. She has fond childhood memories of hanging out with her uncles on the farm and helping in the meat packing plant, which she says she would never be allowed to do today. When she was 12 years old, Anna moved to Coeur d’Alene with her mother and step-father and has been in the area ever since.

Refusing to choose between books and movies, Judge Eckhart loves them both, but she doesn’t have any use for “on-line” books, preferring the real things. A recent read is *My Beloved World* by Sonya Sotomayor, given to her by a friend when she was appointed to the bench. After having watched the movie *Twelve Years a Slave*, which she enjoyed and highly recommends, Anna intends to next read David Fiske’s *Solomon Northup: The Complete Story of the Author of Twelve Years a Slave*. She hopes the book will answer the questions about Northup’s life that the movie left her with.

Judge Eckhart has been challenged in her transition to the bench because of the need to refresh her memory of areas of the law that she has not dealt with for 12 years, as well as learning areas of law new to her, such as child protection. She enjoys the wide variety of cases assigned to her, saying that there is always something new on a daily basis. She does, however, find it challenging to “get up to speed” on cases that might consist of 12 or more files while also keeping up on the daily review of new cases.

Asked about people she admires, Anna spoke of the many amazing people in her personal and professional life but specifically called out her mother because of her overwhelming love of her children and grandchildren. She also spoke of her admiration for her husband and his strong work ethic through 40 years in the lumber industry, beginning on the green chain and working his way to management. Professionally, Judge Eckhart noted her inspiration by, and admiration for, Judge Penny Friedlander because of her compassion and wisdom.

Judge Eckhart finds inspiration in Henry Ford, who said, “If you think you can do a thing or think you can’t do a thing, you’re right.” If ever she feels that she doesn’t want to try something because she might fail, she remembers that quote and asks herself, “What is the worst thing that could happen?”

Thank you for sharing with us, Judge Eckhart, and welcome to the bench!