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Newsroom

Alumna is Pa. County's First Female DA

Janine Edwards '97, Wayne County, Pennsylvania's first-ever female district attorney, talks about her past as a public defender and plans for her new role as DA.

From the WAYNE INDEPENDENT, Honesdale, Pa.: "Janine Edwards takes over as first female DA in county" by Greg Little



HONESDALE, Penn., Jan 18, 2012 —

She's the first female district attorney to ever serve Wayne County.

But **Janine Edwards [RWU Law '97]** doesn't look at her new position in that light. Her goal is simply to be a good district attorney and to serve the people of Wayne County.

"The taxpayers deserve to have a DA who can bring prosecution to conviction," said Edwards during an interview Wednesday with *The Wayne Independent*. "You should get what you pay for."

Edwards is a lifetime resident of Wayne County and graduate of the Wayne Highlands School system. She attended the University of Scranton for her undergraduate work with a major in English and **completed law school at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island**. She lives in Honesdale Borough and has two children, Max, 10, and Mia, 9.

Edwards first ran for DA in 2003 but eventually lost that bid. However, she said the office is "something I kept in my mind."

In 2010, she made the decision to run for the office, won the primary election and was unopposed in the general election. She was sworn-in on Jan. 3.

Edwards has many ambitions for the office of district attorney, including making it “more accessible, more pro-active in the community and more pro-active in court.”

She said when exploring the possibility of running for the office, she had overwhelming support from many of the people in the community.

“It seemed to me to have that kind of support, there was a need to take over that office,” said Edwards.

Edwards, who was a part-time public defender for 10 years and who has also practiced a wide variety of law for the past 15 years, said she is “comfortable” in the courtroom.

She points to a case last week in which a man was arrested and accused of trying to recruit children in Honesdale to peddle drugs. Edwards was in the courtroom for the bail hearing fighting to make sure he had a “high bail.” The man’s bail was set at \$250,000.



Edwards also said she plans to be involved heavily in many of the cases. But she also said she is “very confident” in the team at the DA’s office and they will be successful in the prosecution of crime in the county.

The DA’s office consists of a staff of 11 people and Edwards said she is in the process of getting to know everyone and the processes involved.

She also pointed out that just because she came into office didn’t mean crime or the courts came to a halt.

"There is not much room for a learning curve," said Edwards.

Edwards gave high marks to her staff and everyone at the courthouse for being "very accommodating" as she adjusts to her new position.

One major focus for Edwards is getting out into the community, especially the schools, and raising awareness regarding many issues.

"Getting into the schools is such an important aspect of the district attorney's office," said Edwards.

She wants to raise awareness of issues involving drug abuse, sex crimes and issues relating to violence.

Edwards also has a high concern about matters involving materials on the Internet. Those include everything from pornography to stalking. She called it an "extreme concern" and said she hopes to use her office to help raise awareness of "what is involved" and some of the consequences which can result for the youth of the area.

She said Wayne County is not immune to people who are sexual predators or drug dealers and her office has every intent of dealing with those people as sternly as possible.

"I want to make Wayne County as safe as it can be," said Edwards.

Edwards did say a big advantage she has is her first assistant, Pat Robinson, who has 15 years experience at the DA's office and knows the system very well.

The one thing you can determine very quickly about Edwards is she is determined to make improvements in the office and that she enjoys her work.

"I do," said Edwards when asked if she is enjoying her time so far at the office.

"I enjoy the courtroom," said Edwards.

That might be very good for the public and could be bad for the criminals.

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