



Volume 1, Issue 2

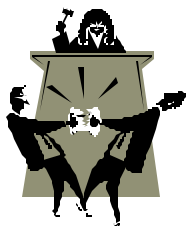
November, 2001
Happy Holidays



HELP YOURSELF

An ongoing article of Self-Help Advice
-SMALL CLAIMS & JP COURTS

By Sherry Brown



Many times people call us with issues that do not warrant the cost of attorney driven litigation. Although we are always ready to help, sometimes self-help through either the Justice of the Peace Court (JP Court), or the Small Claims Court is the best solution. This is just an outline of how these courts work. **We recommend you contact an attorney to determine if these courts are your best choice before you act.**

THE COURTS

SMALL CLAIMS	JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
Can hear cases regarding money damages only (no personal property).	Can hear civil suits for money damages, foreclosures of mortgages and recovery of personal property.
Cannot hear any case where the amount of the money involved is over \$5,000.00.	Cannot hear any case where the value of the issues (money or personal property) is over \$5,000.00.
The filing fee is \$62.00 (\$12.00 court costs, \$50.00 service fee in Denton County).	The filing fee is \$67.00 (17.00 court costs, \$50.00 service fee in Denton County)

THE PROCESS

Although this is highly simplified, the process is similar in both courts.

- The Court arrange service of your suit papers on the person you are suing.
- The person you sue will have approximately ten days to file an answer after they receive a copy of the suit.
- Whether they answer or not, the court will set a hearing.
- If the person sued files an answer, a hearing will be set within 45 days of the filing of that answer.
- You can request a jury trial for a fee of \$5.00.
- If no jury is requested, the Judge will decide the case.
- In the hearing, you will make a brief statement of facts.
- You will have to present evidence of your damages in dollars.
- You can have witnesses subpoenaed to testify for you.
- The person you sue will get to present their version of the facts.
- The person you sue can dispute the itemization of damages you present.
- The person sued can also present witnesses.
- After a verdict is given, either side can appeal the issue in a new trial.



If you need extra copies of our newsletters, call us. We'll gladly send them.

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FRIENDS & CLIENTS NEWSLETTER

DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS

An ongoing article about the things people don't like to talk about

-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

By Attorney Steve Kuzmich

Lawyers are often the first to hear from their clients on subject matters that commonly are not talked about; such as domestic violence. Here are some things you need to know in dealing with a friend or family member who is the victim of domestic violence:

THE STATISTICS:

This is a huge and common problem that has an impact on individuals regardless of race or economic status. The following are Texas Statistics:

- ❖ Over 100 women are murdered a year in domestic violence incidents.
- ❖ In the year 2000, over 11,000 adults and 15,000 children spent time in a domestic violence shelter.
- ❖ 23% of those in need of a shelter are turned away due to lack of space.
- ❖ Over 162,000 calls are made each year to domestic violence hotlines.
- ❖ 56% of children killed in domestic violence incidents are under two years old.



WHO CAN HELP YOU:

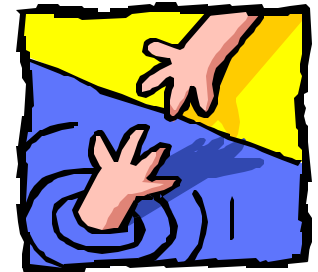
There are a number of resources available to victims:

- ❖ First, call the police whenever you or a family member are the victim of a crime at 911.
- ❖ Denton County Friends of the Family provides counseling, shelter, and a 24 hour hotline at 1-800-572-4031, or 972-221-0650. You can also call the National Domestic Violence hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE.
- ❖ The Denton County Children's Advocacy Center can provide assistance to children who are the victims of crime at 972-317-2818.
- ❖ Various forms of protective orders are available and can often be obtained through the district attorney's office or an attorney.



HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- ❖ There are numerous volunteering and donation opportunities available through Friends of the Family at 1-940-382-7273 and The Denton County Children's Advocacy Center at 972-317-2818.
- ❖ You can call Friends of the Family and request the "shelter needs list" to see what household items you can donate to the shelter.



For more information, go to the Texas Council on Family Violence web site at www.TCFV.org.

We're on the web at www.kuzmichlaw.com



MEET THE STAFF

-SHERRY BROWN

In this issue we want to introduce you to **Sherry Brown**. Sherry is a long time resident of Denton County. Sherry and her husband Todd Brown, still newly-weds, are expecting their first child in April.

Sherry's background includes a certificate as a medical assistant. Sherry worked in the medical field for eleven years. During that time she worked for medical doctors, pediatricians and chiropractors. Through her work in the medical field, Sherry became interested in law.

Sherry started working as a legal assistant in 1993. She has done work in Personal Injury, Family Law, and Criminal Law. Sherry joined the **Kuzmich Firm** in 1999, she works on files throughout the legal process, from notice of claim, through settlement or trial. Sherry is a "hands on" person who deals directly with her clients. Sherry is also a very compassionate and knowledgeable paralegal. We enjoy working with Sherry, and we are sure you will too.



SAFETY TIPS

-FIRE PREVENTION

By Nicole Gordillo

Household fires are always devastating. House fires occur often during the holidays as people use their fireplaces, space heaters, and Christmas lights. Fortunately you can protect yourself and your family from fire. We asked **Flower Mound Assistant Fire Chief Fran Fry** what were some things people could do to protect themselves and their family from fire. These were some of his suggestions:



- ◆ Install Smoke Detectors and test them every month
- ◆ Make a fire escape plan with a safe location to meet after evacuation, rather than wonder who got out
- ◆ Keep an approved fire extinguisher in the kitchen
- ◆ Don't overload electrical circuits
- ◆ Don't run electrical cords under rugs or walkways
- ◆ Don't use frayed or spliced lights on your Christmas tree or other decorations
- ◆ Keep real Christmas trees moist and fresh so that the lights don't create a fire

In addition to these ideas, we suggest:

- ◆ Have fireplace chimneys inspected regularly
- ◆ If you must use a space heater, use only those with "tip sensors"
- ◆ Keep the area near a space heater clear of flammable objects
- ◆ Install a carbon monoxide detector

