

The goal of the Child Support Enforcement Unit at the Platte County Attorney's Office is to improve the well-being of Platte County children and families by promoting the emotional and financial responsibility between parents and children; this is accomplished by establishing paternity when necessary, locating absent parents, establishing child support, and monitoring and enforcing child support obligations. The presence of the Platte County Child Support Enforcement Unit accounts for 4.6 million dollars in child support payments being annually disbursed to Platte County children. Sixty-six percent of the Unit's annual budget is reimbursed to the County by the Federal and State governments. In addition, annual incentive payments received from the federal government amount to well over \$30,000.00 a year. Thus, the cost to Platte County to run the unit, consisting of three full-time child support enforcement workers, is less than \$50,000 a year. The Unit is perhaps the County's "best kept secret," according to Diane Thress, senior child support enforcement officer who has served as an enforcement worker in the Platte County Attorney's Office since 2008.

Recently, the Platte County Board of Supervisors authorized the Unit to relocate into the old district courtroom on the third floor of the courthouse, at the request of County Attorney Carl Hart. The new office space is now accessed through the front door of the County Attorney's Office by making a sharp left hand turn. The work area has been enhanced with new carpet, painting, computer work stations, and an updated phone system. The most impressive feature of the room is a large mural depicting Lady Justice on the east wall, reminding the public and the Unit's workers of the need to follow the law and legal procedures incidental to establishing and satisfying child support obligations.

Diane Thress indicates her delight with the new office space now occupied by her and two other full time workers, Chistine Tenski and Rebecca Zulkoski. Thress indicates, "Our new work environment greatly enhances our ability to interact with and serve the public. We are so appreciative that the County Board quickly found a solution to our space problem and privacy concerns." Previous to moving into the new area, the three employees occupied a small corner within the County Attorney's Office, making for cramped quarters, limited public access to the Unit's employees, and a lack of privacy. "We used to have to leave our work stations, go to the front window where we lacked computer access and privacy," Thress explained. "Those issues are completely resolved. Moreover, Deputy County Attorney Breanna Anderson, who handles the majority of our child support matters, now can visit with us in complete privacy in our new work environment, outside of earshot of the public and the other County Attorney employees. We are just delighted." Thress invites the public to come up to the third floor of the courthouse in order to see the old courtroom, now put back into use for a very important public purpose: enhancing the wellbeing and financial support of Platte County's children.