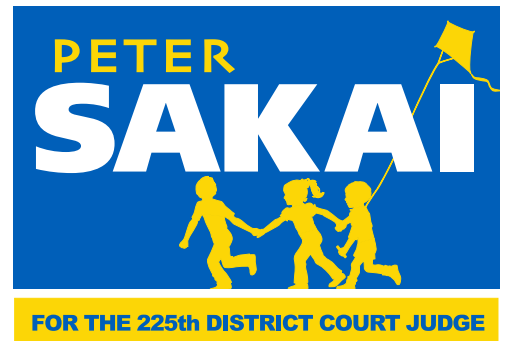


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Empower Families. Protect Children. Improve System.



FAREWELL MESSAGE TO THE CITIZENS OF BEXAR COUNTY

It is with deep and profound mixed feelings that I write this farewell message to all the citizens of Bexar County. Some of you have known me throughout my 25 year legal career and remember me as a former prosecutor and a private practitioner which allowed me to serve for over 18 years as a judge of the Municipal Court, Juvenile Court and Children's Court. It is time for me to forge a new path to continue to make a difference in our community. I would like to take this opportunity to say *thank you*.

I am saddened to leave a job that I loved to do and enjoyed the daily miracles of finding permanent homes for foster children through adoption or reunifying children with their parents that become responsible and accountable for their actions. First and foremost, I want to extend my humblest gratitude and thanks to the citizens of Bexar County for supporting my vision to protect and shelter the abused and neglected children of our community. Our community has shown that it truly cares about its children especially when the tragic child deaths from the past year rocked the bedrock of our faith. As you know, one of these deaths

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shook me personally causing me to take a brief sabbatical to allow me to regain the focus and passion to hear the child abuse and neglect cases in the Children's Court. I had to rely on my personal faith in God and the prayers of the community. I want all of you to know that I came back a stronger and even more passionate judge for our children and families, most in need. I hope that everyone realizes that we all play a significant role in all of our children's lives from being a parent, a public servant or to being a person who prays and cares about children.

Second, I want to thank all the persons and organizations that were involved in the creation of the nationally recognized Bexar County Children's Court. The past 11 years of sitting on Children's Court has been a remarkable journey. Starting with a court that was dubbed "the closet" and finishing with the state of art Children's Court. There are numerous people that should be recognized and should share in the accolades, but space limitations keep me from listing this huge list. The Court was truly a labor of love and collaboration of all public officials at the Bexar County Courthouse and many people, including the court employees, past and present – ALL have made it a place of dignity and respect for all who are part of the Children's Court. The Court has achieved tremendous success through corporate sponsors especially A T & T (formerly known as SBC) through a \$2 million dollar technology grant and the hard work of the Hidalgo Foundation. We should all be proud and value the unity by which we came together for a common purpose of protecting children and empowering families.

Finally, I must recognize and show my eternal gratitude to the people from the community that come into the Children's courtroom and are there to help the abused and neglected children. I am talking about the community volunteers, such as CASA advocates, the nonprofit agencies that provide safety and shelter to the children, Bexar County Child Welfare Board members who help direct resources for our children and all those people in the community that wrote me letters of support and gratitude during my term of office. Your spirit, commitment and faith are what makes a difference in a child's life and makes our community stronger and healthier.

This heartfelt message is more than a farewell from me. It is an affirmation and recognition that our community is built on a bedrock foundation of people that care for children and are willing to step up to provide a better place to live for all. Hurricane Katrina and Rita have taught all of us how fragile life can be and that we can not control the life forces that devastate and destroy a community. Moreover, Bexar County stood up and took care of children and families most in need from that disaster. Our charge, then, must be that we continue to empower families, protect children and improve the system. God bless our children, keep them safe. I pray that God continue to strengthen our community so that we all have a brighter future.

In the spirit of this holiday season, I wish you all the best.

JUDGE PETER SAKAI

Judge Sakai has honorably served on the Bexar County Children's Court since January 1, 1995 and will be leaving the bench on December 31, 2005.