



Finnegan Goes to Work, But It's All Play to Him

When Douglas County Juvenile Court Judge Doug Johnson arrived to speak at the Omaha Legal Professionals Association's (OLPA) September meeting, he brought along a "plus-one."

His companion was his dog Finnegan, an English Setter-Standard Poodle mix who is an unofficial member of Johnson's courtroom.

The two-and-a-half year old dog was introduced to court almost a year ago, when the judge thought the dog's friendly presence might ease the anxiety of those in the courtroom – parents, children, even the lawyers. He was right, and with his staff's blessing, Finnegan has been there ever since.

Finnegan also attends the annual Family Reunification Picnic, to the delight of parents and children alike.

Johnson hopes to enroll Finnegan in a therapy dog training program so he can become officially certified. Dogs have been proven to have a calming effect on those in high stress situations.

Johnson has been on the bench for 20 years, so he's seen every kind of situation. But when the litigants leave his courtroom, they don't say goodbye to him, just to Finnegan.



OLPA President Bonnie Kudron welcomes Judge Doug Johnson and his dog Finnegan to their meeting.